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THE Atlantic

SEPTEMBER 2007

LESSONS OF A FAILED PRESIDENCY

WHY KARL ROVE COULDN'T DELIVER

by **JOSHUA GREEN**

A BUSH SPEECHWRITER TELLS ALL

by **MATTHEW SCULLY**

CAN THE DEMOCRATS SEIZE THEIR MOMENT?

by **ROSS DOUTHAT**

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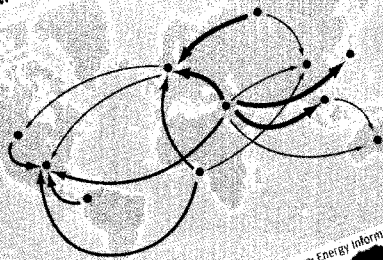
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**There are 193 countries in the world.
None of them are energy independent.**

So who's holding whom over a barrel?

Global Oil Flows



Source: Energy Information Administration

The fact is, the vast majority of countries rely on the few energy-producing nations that won the geological lottery, blessing them with abundant hydrocarbons. And yet, even regions with plenty of raw resources import some form of energy. Saudi Arabia, for example, the world's largest oil exporter, imports refined petroleum products like gasoline.

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True global energy security will be a result of cooperation and engagement, not isolationism. When investment and expertise are allowed to flow freely across borders, the engine of innovation is ignited, prosperity is fueled and the energy available to everyone increases. At the same time, balancing the needs of producers and consumers is as crucial as increasing supply and curbing demand. Only then will the world enjoy energy peace-of-mind.

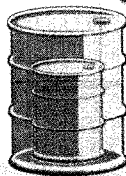
Succeeding in securing energy for everyone doesn't have to come at the expense of anyone. Once we all start to think differently about energy, then we can truly make this promise a reality.

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Projected Global Oil Demand

2004 DEMAND
82 mbpd*

2030 DEMAND
115 mbpd



Source: International Energy Agency
million barrels per day

OBJECTIVES EFFICIENCIES

ENERGY IMPORTS BY OIL EXPORTING COUNTRIES

	GASOLINE	ELECTRICITY	NATURAL GAS	COAL
Saudi Arabia				
Russia				
Norway				
UAE				
Nigeria				

Source: Energy Information Administration

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

- DIVERSIFY ENERGY SUPPLIES
- FIND MORE TRADITIONAL FUELS
- DEVELOP ALTERNATIVES AND RENEWABLES
- FOSTER OPEN MARKETS & TRANSPARENCY
- ENCOURAGE CONSERVATION/ENERGY EFFICIENCY

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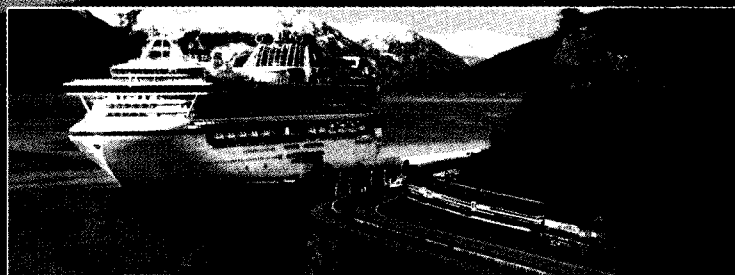
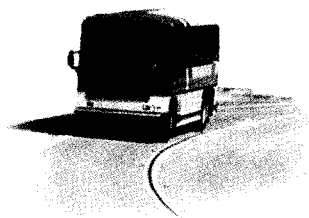


Human energy

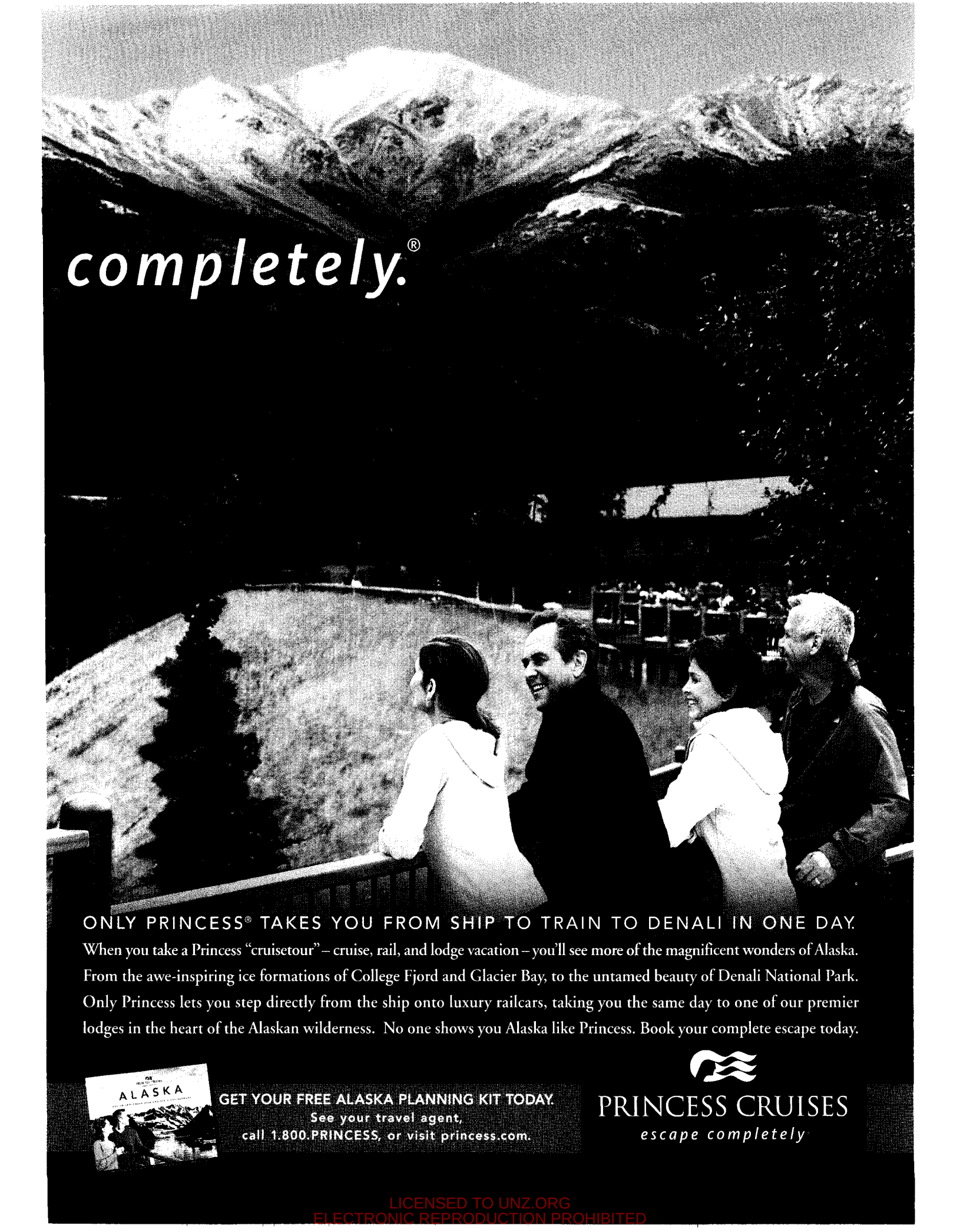
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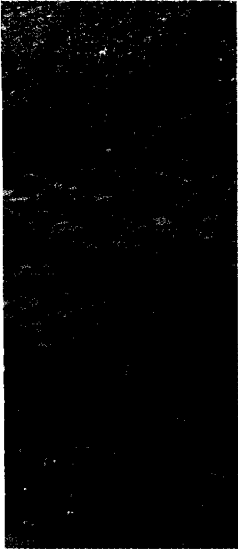


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successful your journey will be.

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different perspectives and gaining insights
from the experiences of others help
you get where you need to go.

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wherever it might take us, we are
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Altria

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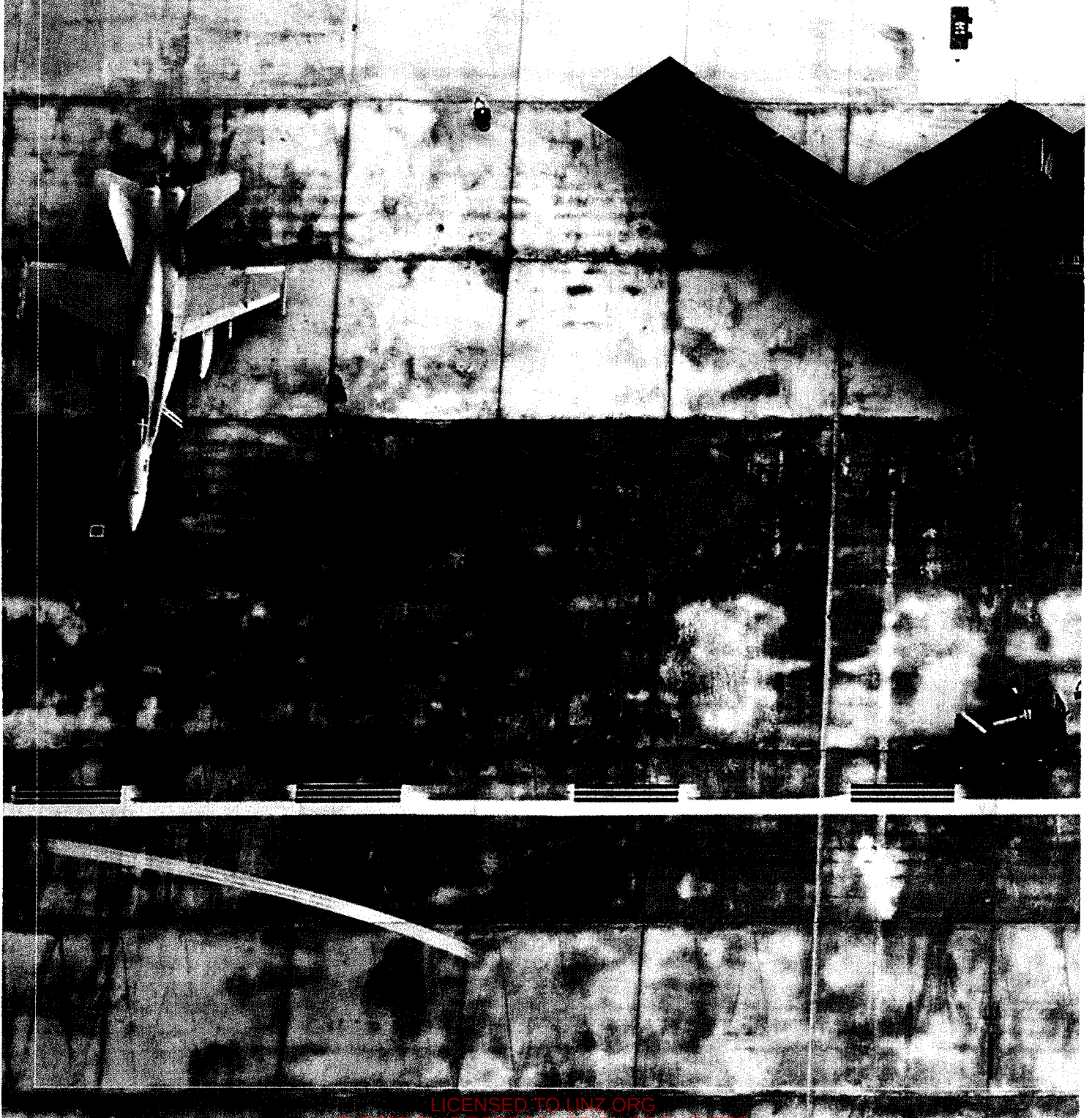
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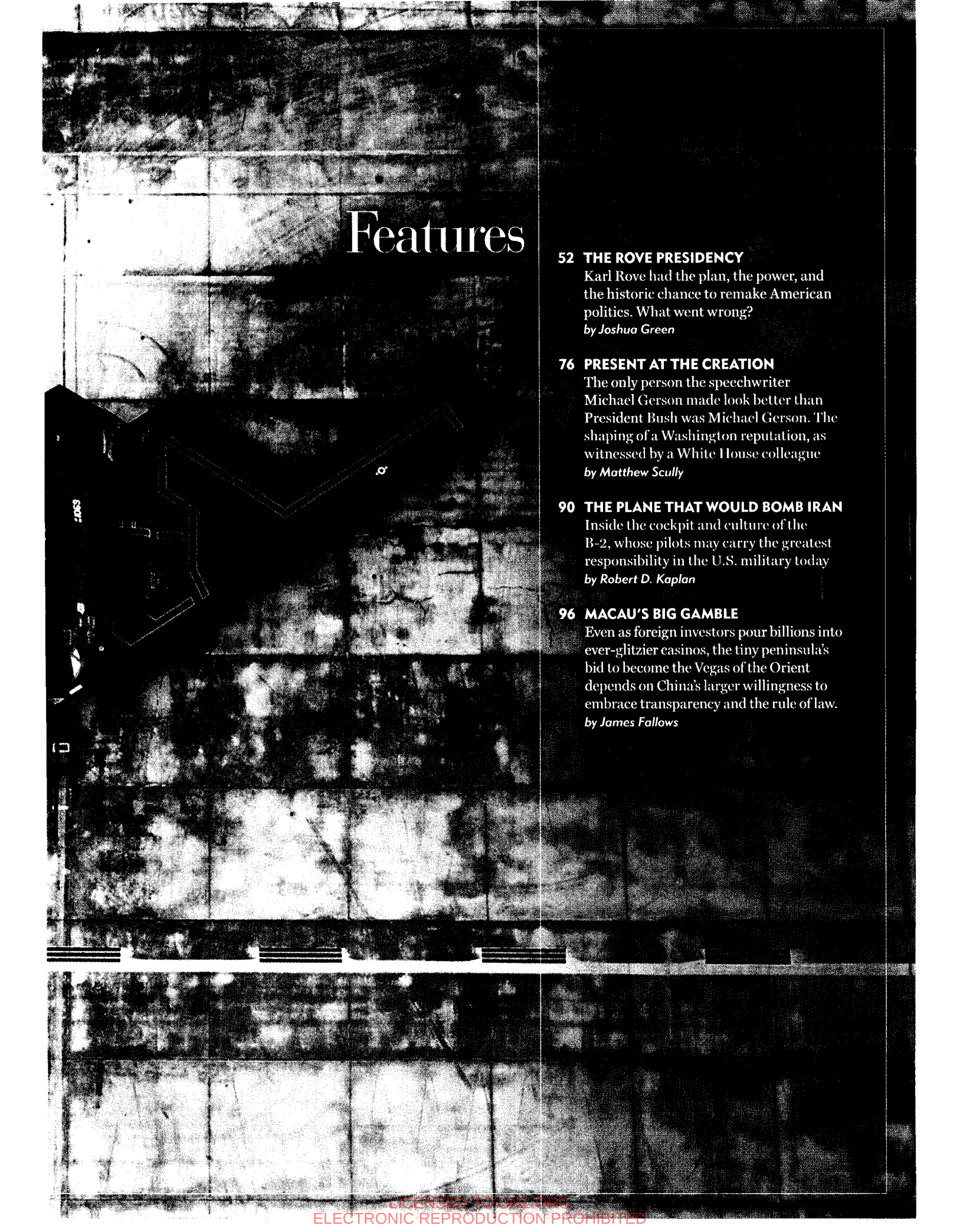


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by James Fallows



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Cardmember *Harry David*

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Favorite moment *Staged successful coup d'etat against
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The Issue in Brief

THE **Atlantic**

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A B-2 Spirit bomber is serviced during the Valiant Shield 2006 training exercise at Andersen Air Force Base, in Guam. Robert D. Kaplan scrutinizes one of the military's most crucial (and costly) weapons in "The Plane That Would Bomb Iran."

U.S. AIR FORCE PHOTO/
STAFF SERGEANT BENNIE J. DAVIS

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INTERVIEW: THE ROVE EFFECT

Atlantic senior editor Joshua Green, author of "The Rove Presidency," discusses the legacy of one of Washington's most influential figures.

INTERVIEW: PRIVATE EQUITY DECONSTRUCTED

Atlantic senior editor Clive Crook weighs in on the private-equity business—why it's booming, where it's headed, and what it means for American capitalism.

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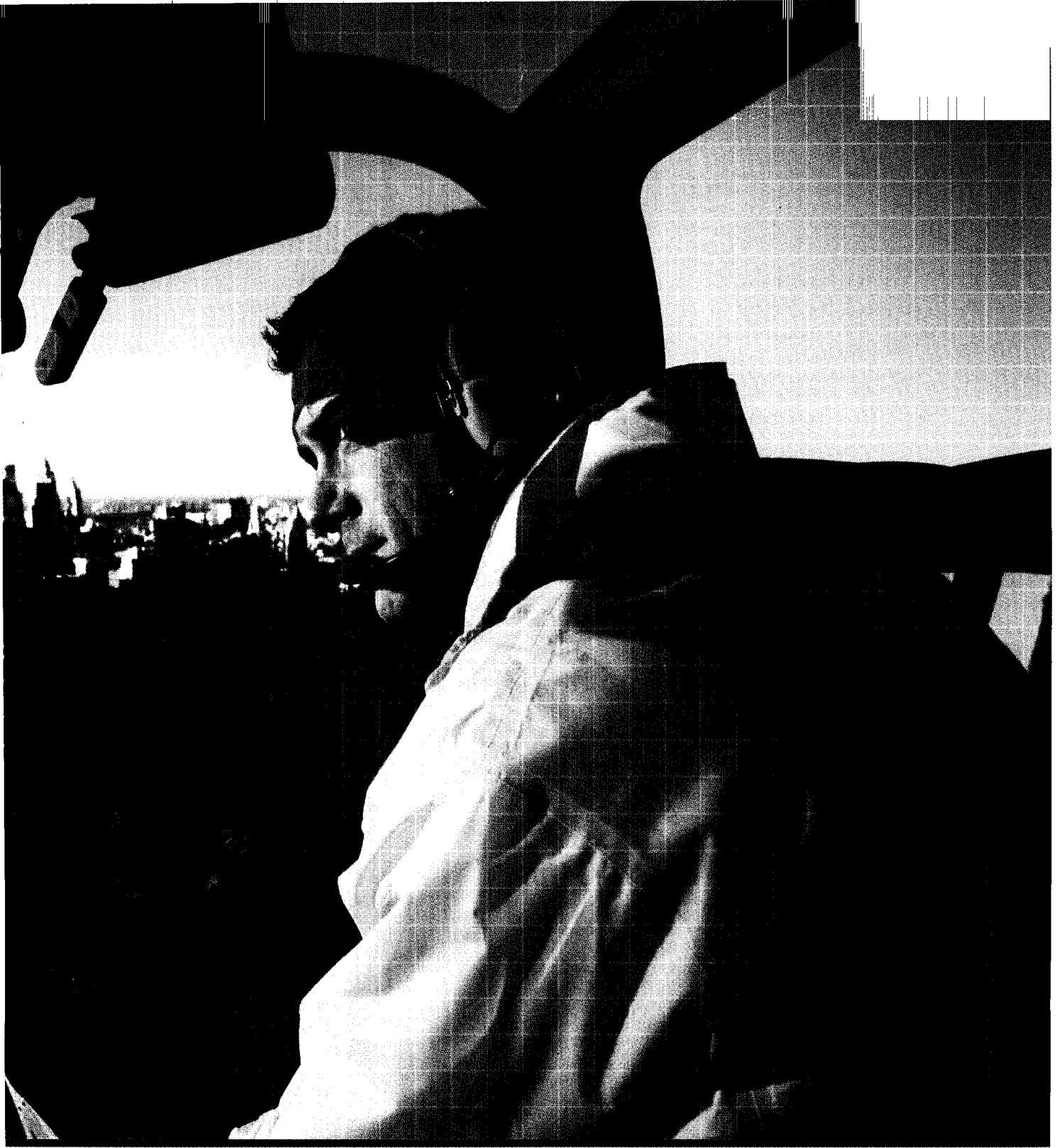
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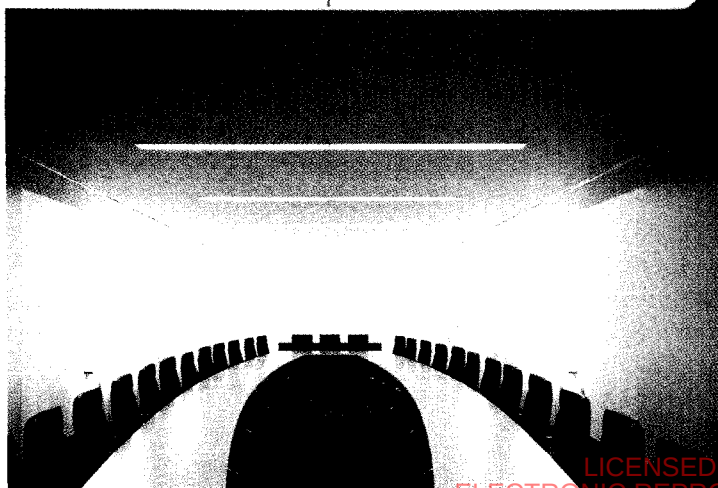
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SEPTEMBER 2007 THE ATLANTIC



THE CHURCH IN CHINA

The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.” This message has echoed throughout the Catholic Church’s history. Its authority rests upon Jesus’ teaching “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Unfortunately, this message is not echoed in Adam Minter’s profile of Jin Luxian (“Keeping Faith,” July/August *Atlantic*). The message in that story is “Political expediency is the seed of the Church.”

In the course of conveying that message, Minter distorts a great number of things. For example, he depicts Ignatius Kung Pin-mei as a troublemaker, and Jin as a peacemaker. But Kung, Bishop Peter Joseph Fan Xueyan of Baoding, Bishop Dominic Deng Yiming of Guangzhou, and thousands of other living and deceased clergy, religious, and laypersons continue to be the symbol of Catholicism and the source of strength for Roman Catholics in China for two reasons: first, they either laid down their lives or are still suffering for their Roman Catholic faith, and second, they spent time in prison for refusing to renounce the authority of the pope and for refusing to join the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association. Their martyrdom and suffering, together with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, are the reasons that the Roman Catholic Church in China has survived—“The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church”—and not because of Jin’s “get[ting] things done now,” as Minter describes it. Statistics verify this truth: The underground Church has approximately 10 million faithful, while the government-sanctioned Church has only 4 million.

Minter also fails to point out that Jin stole the authority of the bishop of Shanghai from Kung while Kung was not yet retired. Kung was Jin’s bishop, and Jin should have been obedient to Cardinal Kung. Instead, in collaboration with the

Chinese Communist regime, Jin betrayed him and stole the diocese. Minter accepts Jin’s explanation that “reject[ing] the appointment would not only place the seminary at risk, but also open the Shanghai hierarchy to a priest more inclined toward the CPA and the Communist Party.” Jin made this self-serving excuse because he wanted to be perceived as the irreplaceable savior of the Catholic Church in China.

Foreseeing what would happen to the Catholic Church under Chairman Mao, Kung in 1954 led all his priests and seminarians—including Father Jin Luxian—to Sheshan Basilica, where they prayed and took an oath never to do anything to compromise their Catholic faith. The next year, Kung and Jin were among those imprisoned, and efforts were made to get each of them to join the puppet Catholic Church, now known as the Catholic Patriotic Association. Kung was unwilling to defect and was eventually given a life sentence. Jin was more pliable, however. In his book *The Catholic Church in China*, the late Father Ladany, a renowned China expert, made the following reference to Jin Luxian:

Several families suffered because of his confessions ... The court verdict (we have the text of the verdict) stated that he was given “only” eighteen years because in jail he was willing to reveal the crimes of others.

Because of his collaboration, Jin earned the trust of the Communists and worked as a translator under the government’s Ministry of Security. One does not need too much imagination to visualize how comfortable a translator’s “jailed” life must have been.

As is well known, Bishop Kung, while still in a Communist prison, was named a cardinal in secret in 1979. He was publicly proclaimed a cardinal in the consistory of 1991. When he received the cardinal’s insignia, the ovation lasted

seven minutes. Upon Kung’s death, John Paul II called him “this noble son of China and of the Church.” In him are fulfilled the words of the Gospel: “Well done, good and faithful servant; ... enter into the joy of your master.”

Joseph Kung
President, Cardinal Kung Foundation
Stamford, Conn.

In his profile of Jin Luxian, Adam Minter writes:

Christianity first reached China in the 7th century, carried by Nestorians via the Silk Road, but it wasn’t until the mid-16th century, with the arrival of the Society of Jesus, that the Catholic Church established a permanent presence in the Middle Kingdom.

Actually, during the early years of the Pax Mongolica (roughly 1268 to 1368), Khubilai Khan, the son of a Nestorian mother, invited the Italian Franciscans to establish a Latin Christian presence in China that lasted well into the 15th-century Ming era. This presence produced large churches with thousands of converts, and Franciscan-introduced imagery of the Madonna of Humility made a lasting impression in the form of the Child-giving Guanyin, south China’s beloved folk goddess. This image, which seemed so “Marian” to Ricci and his followers (it was!), indicated the strength of the Franciscan-nurtured faith among the Chinese—a faith that sprang back into full blossom with the help of the Society of Jesus. The great irony is that the Jesuits were unaware that their Franciscan brothers had been in China two centuries before them.

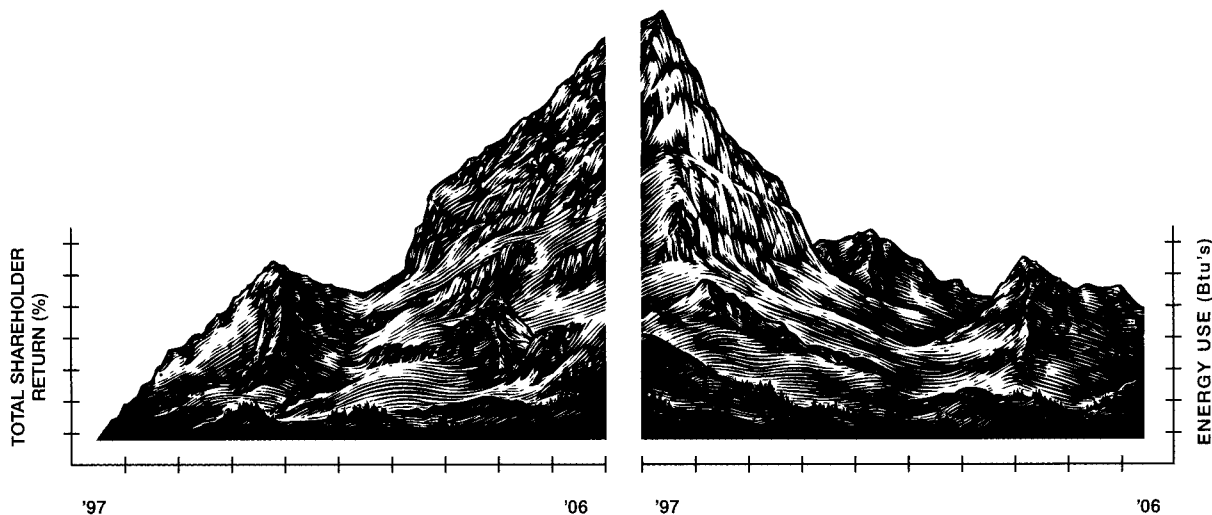
Lauren Arnold
Mountain View, Calif.

Adam Minter replies:

On June 30, Pope Benedict XVI issued his long-awaited letter to China’s Catholics. Among other topics, the letter includes a

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discussion of bishops, including those—like Shanghai's Bishop Aloysius Jin Luxian—who were ordained without the pontifical mandate but later were "received into communion with the Successor of Peter." These bishops, the pope explains, were vetted and granted "full and legitimate exercise of episcopal jurisdiction." Significantly, the letter's explanatory notes add that these same bishops "were especially concerned with the good of the faithful and with an eye to the future."

The contrast between the pope's letter and Joseph Kung's letter is stark. Where the pope is conciliatory, Kung is bitter, going so far as to accuse Jin of stealing the Shanghai diocese and joining "the puppet Catholic Church, now known as the Catholic Patriotic Association." The former point overlooks the fact that Jin's 1985 ordination was attended by two foreign priests with the express knowledge and tacit approval of Pope John Paul II. The latter point is factually incorrect (the pope refers to the association as "desired by the

State and extraneous to the structure of the Church"), and implies that Kung is better able to judge Jin's character than the two popes who have recognized him as the *de jure* bishop of Shanghai.

Kung's claim that the underground Church has more adherents than the open Church has no basis in fact. No reliable census of China's Catholics has been taken since the late 1940s, and as a result, figures on China's Catholic population are notoriously unreliable. Hong Kong's Holy Spirit Study Centre, the preeminent clearinghouse for information on China's Catholics, claims that roughly 12 million Catholics live in China, and pointedly does not list a breakdown between the two Church factions. The simple fact is that nobody knows.

Any researcher who delves into the complicated life of Jin Luxian will confront rumors that he collaborated with the Communist regime after his arrest in 1955. I call them "rumors" because by the mid-1990s, they had been largely dis-

credited—including those propagated by Father Laszlo Ladany in 1987—as part of the long process whereby Jin was reconciled with the Vatican and the Jesuits. Kung repeats the allegation that Jin, as a reward for his collaboration, lived as a pampered translator during his prison sentence. Jin did, in fact, work as a translator for Baoding's Public Security Bureau, but only after spending 18 years in prisons and reeducation camps. Even during the post-sentence period, Jin remained in government custody—hardly a situation that could be characterized as a reward for collaboration.

There is little question that Cardinal Kung suffered greatly for his faith, and that faith was rightfully recognized by the pope in 1979 and 1991. But there is also little question that the foundation that bears Kung's name has long been out of touch with the conciliatory tone that Pope John Paul II began to cultivate in the early '80s, and which Pope Benedict XVI's letter has codified.



Finally, Lauren Arnold is quite right that the Franciscans established a thriving mission in Mongol China. But it was not permanent (it ended in 1368), and that is why I chose not to mention it.

CONDI'S GRAND STRATEGY

I was disappointed with David Samuels's whitewashed profile of Condoleezza Rice ("Grand Illusions," June *Atlantic*). Any discussion of Rice's ability to advance peace in the Middle East must begin with an analysis of her role in the Iraq War. The job of the national-security adviser, the position Rice held during George W. Bush's first term, is to referee the various foreign-policy arms of the U.S. government, and to balance the advice and interests of the Defense Department, the State Department, and the CIA. This places her at the very heart of the administration's failure to plan for the post-invasion period. Rice either agreed with the philosophy and approach of the neoconservatives or had neither

the competence nor the courage to stand up to them. Either way, her prior failures make her singularly unqualified to lead peacemaking efforts in the region today. It is not clear why Samuels does not deem this dismal track record relevant to his analysis.

*Ely Ratner
San Francisco, Calif.*

I appreciated David Samuels's thoughtful piece on Condoleezza Rice. However, the panting descriptions of her "long, athletic legs" and "sophisticated clothes" as early as the third paragraph struck me as irrelevant. The emphasis Samuels places on her figure and dress disappointingly reminds the reader that what the press values in a woman, no matter her status, is her looks.

Samuels even calls Rice's "bureaucratic side"—which turns out to be her political savvy and intellectual acumen—"boring." To the contrary. Her junior Sovietologist credentials and her "ability to

master briefing books" are more compelling to me than her "lemon-meringue-colored" suit.

*Arline Welty
Chicago, Ill.*

David Samuels replies:

I am puzzled by Arline Welty's objections to my brief acknowledgment of Condoleezza Rice's "long, athletic legs" and "sophisticated clothes." It is a fact that Rice has great legs, and she shows them off by wearing skirts that would be at home on a 25-year-old assistant editor at Vogue. The idea that the physical appearance of female public officials is somehow off-limits to journalistic description is a relic of '70s-style equalitarian feminism that would insist on deliberate gender-blindness as the only conceivable road to equality. Rice is making a statement about who she is: a vital, attractive Western woman who works out religiously and is proud of her body and her taste in clothes—aspects of her public self

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that are no more and no less available for proper journalistic description than John Edwards's silky mane and Barack Obama's awesome abs.

As for the war in Iraq, there is plenty of blame to go around. While I stated that most observers regard Rice as one of the least-effective national-security advisers in history, it is silly to hold Rice—then a relatively junior member of the president's foreign-policy team—primarily responsible for the many failures of American policy in Iraq, a policy that was largely shaped, often in competing directions, by President Bush, Vice President Cheney, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, Secretary of State Powell, and other powerful senior officials.

The question of whether Rice is "qualified" to lead peacemaking efforts in the Middle East today is simply offensive. Of course she is. The likelihood of her diplomatic efforts' succeeding rests not on her "qualifications" but on the larger philosophical and practical approach to the problems of the Middle East that she shares with President Bush. While I am sometimes tempted by the more hopeful-sounding aspects of their shared vision, I think that reality is simply not on their side.

HOLLYWOOD PIRATES

Matthew Quirk's short piece on movie piracy ("The Movie Pirates," June *Atlantic*) was eye-opening, but it disappointed me in a few respects. The article cites statistics of questionable provenance. For instance, Motion Picture Association of America head Dan Glickman is cited as an authority regarding Chinese DVD piracy, but his objectivity on the subject is comparable to Jack Valenti's when discussing Lyndon Johnson's presidency. BayTSP, an antipiracy tracking company, is cited as the source for data on the pirated movie described in the article, and while I have no specific reason to question BayTSP's data, the company obviously has a commercial interest in emphasizing the severity of the piracy problem.

The article says, "Dozens of other illegal versions of the movie [were] posted to

other file-sharing networks," but it doesn't discuss the crucial issues—quality and reliability—this raises, which may pull customers toward legitimate downloads. Different pirated versions of a single film can vary widely in quality and come in formats that may or may not play back properly. Downloading software, such as the cracked version of Microsoft Windows Vista mentioned in the piece, poses a huge danger as a vector for viruses, spyware, etc.

But the article's essential point—that content owners have yet to fully seize a great opportunity posed by Internet distribution—is vividly illustrated by a recent experience of mine. After downloading a pirated copy of a new episode of *The Sopranos*, I received a notice—triggered by a tracking company such as BayTSP—from HBO threatening legal action. As one of the millions of *Sopranos* addicts, I would happily buy a legitimate download, if only that were possible.

Why isn't it possible? One reason is that movie studios and TV networks are just as subject to "channel conflict" as other businesses: The Internet and other new distribution methods threaten their existing sales channels, such as theater chains, affiliate stations, and cable/satellite providers. Accelerating DVD releases of movies may make sense for the studios, but not for cineplex owners. Putting *The Office* online may make sense for NBC, but not for KIOU-TV in Peoria.

*Ken Broomfield
San Luis Obispo, Calif.*

MILITARY POLITICS

Andrew Bacevich argues ("Warrior Politics," May *Atlantic*) that it is "short-sighted and dangerous" for our society to permit a group of soldiers to join the debate over the Iraq War. It would be absurd to tailor national-security policy to the whims of men and women in uniform, whether officer or enlisted. However, the context of campaigns such as the Appeal for Redress—a movement I co-founded comprising service members who have chosen to voice their opposition to the war in Iraq—must be considered before judgment can be cast.

The proponents of this war, and sadly even the so-called opposition in the halls of power, are justifying the continued funding of the occupation of Iraq because to do otherwise would be, in their words, "abandoning our troops." As long as the men and women of the military are being used as political human shields in the debate over war funding, troops are a component of the national dialogue, whether they want to be or not. The Appeal for Redress, which is entirely legal, becomes justified when politicians use the aura of the troops as a means to solidify their agendas. It is unconscionable that policy makers are using troops as their rhetorical Monopoly money, flaunting an imaginary moral authority while they continue to put our young service members in a position where they must kill or die for a lie, for oil, or to preserve the remaining shreds of presidential credibility.

Therefore, the Appeal for Redress is not the military seeking a more promi-

nent role in politics; it is troops renouncing the role being projected onto them. Bacevich claims, "Although [the soldiers, sailors, and marines driving the Appeal for Redress are] sworn to obey, they have undertaken to obstruct [their commander in chief]." What he neglects to clarify is that we, as members of the armed forces, are sworn to do more than simply obey; we are sworn to support and defend the Constitution against all enemies, foreign and domestic.

All people, especially soldiers, are bound to their consciences before their commander in chief. Accordingly, when I served in Iraq, I was a human being first and an American second. Further, troops are bound to serve their Constitution before their orders. Accordingly, I was an American first and a marine second. This philosophy is what protects humanity from militaries in the wrong hands.

Liam Madden
Co-founder, *Appeal for Redress*
Boston, Mass.

STILL EVOLVING

Your glowing review of Jeffrey J. Kripal's *Esalen: America and the Religion of No Religion* (Cover to Cover, July/August *Atlantic*) does handsome justice to the book, but not to the institute itself. Where does your reviewer get the idea that "Esalen itself ultimately couldn't sustain" its early achievements? Now in its 46th year, Esalen continues to offer some 500 programs to over 15,000 seekers each year. Our visiting faculty is made up of the world's most cutting-edge authors, activists, and field leaders. Our subsidized initiatives incubate social change through citizen diplomacy, political activism, consciousness research, cultural and spiritual studies, interfaith dialogue, and leadership education. Check us out on the Web, or better yet, visit us in Big Sur and see for yourself.

Gordon Wheeler
President/CEO, *Esalen Institute*
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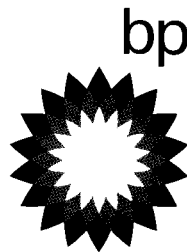
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THE AGENDA

SEPTEMBER 2007 THE ATLANTIC



COMMENT

Can the Democrats succeed where Karl Rove failed?

Blue Period

BY ROSS DOUTHAT

The last enduring Democratic majority began with a midterm sweep. After being routed by Herbert Hoover's Republicans in the 1928 election, the Democrats stormed back to pick up 56 seats in the House and eight in the Senate, leaving both chambers roughly split between the two parties when the 72nd Congress convened in December 1931. The victory, coming on the heels of the 1929 stock-market crash, set the stage for Franklin Delano Roosevelt's triumph in 1932, which ultimately left the Democrats with 60 seats in the Senate and 313 in the House, and established Roosevelt's party as the dominant political force in American life for a generation.

Not even the most optimistic Democratic strategist dares to dream that the Democrats' midterm sweep in '06 will

presage a Roosevelt-style landslide in '08. But the Democrats have reason to hope that they might at least consolidate their majority in the next election and gain unified control of the federal government for the first time since Bill Clinton's first term. The money is going their way—the leading Democratic presidential candidates have outraised their Republican counterparts by nearly 3 to 2—and so are the polls. According to the Pew Research Center, the Democrats have opened up a 15-point edge in party identification, their largest edge in at least 17 years.

Just two years ago, many liberals were bemoaning the GOP's supposed invincibility, trading defeatist books about "The Republican Revolution and the Erosion of American Democracy" and "The New Conservative Coalition and the Drive for

Permanent Power" like Soviet samizdat—if samizdat had occupied the front table at Borders. They were wrong to panic, but right to worry: Many of the factors that allow a lasting majority to emerge—the seeming exhaustion of both parties' traditional agendas, the rise of new hot-button issues, a recent national trauma—are present in contemporary American politics, and Karl Rove recognized the opening. But as Joshua Green explains in this issue ("The Rove Presidency," page 52), Rove's push for Republican dominance too often ran against the grain of public opinion, or else collapsed under the weight of incompetent implementation. From the Middle East to Social Security reform to immigration policy, the Bush White House has made a habit of swinging for the fences, and missing on every swing.

So the opening has passed to the Democrats, who suddenly and unexpectedly have the makings of a durable majority of their own within their grasp. What's more, they have the outlines of a message that might allow them to seize that majority. The issues that split the Democratic Party throughout the Clinton years—between the center and the left, the deficit hawks and the Great Society liberals, *The New Republic* and *The Nation*, Robert Rubin and Robert Reich—still stir passionate debate, but in recent years the factions have been converging. This convergence has been particularly evident in foreign policy, where the debate over the Iraq War has been decisively settled in favor of the opponents of preventive war. But it may prove

Larry Summers and even Robert Rubin—are paying greater attention to left-wing concerns over outsourcing and growing income inequality.

The result is an emerging consensus that uses the centrist achievements of the '90s as a jumping-off point for a new-model populism. Conservatives have spent years mocking liberals for lacking big new ideas, and in a sense their charge still rings true. But the new-model populists have a big old idea, universal health care, that's increasingly popular, and a host of smaller ideas—from wage insurance to assist the victims of outsourcing to universal 401(k) programs to help working-class families build assets for their children—all paid for, presumably, by tax hikes on the rich.

who tend to be more sensitive to economic risk, and thus more supportive of welfare spending, than members of intact nuclear families. But the nuclear family has been in steady decline for years, pushed along by falling marriage rates and rising out-of-wedlock births, trends that are likely to create an ever-larger base for a left-populist majority.

The pressure of continued outsourcing may also increase the public's appetite for a smart left populism, as even well-educated workers—in fields from financial services to health care—begin to face stiff competition from overseas. In this landscape, it's easy to imagine the middle-class anxiety that the political scientist Jacob Hacker termed “office-park populism” defining the domestic debate over the next 20 years, and easy to imagine a Democratic majority that capitalizes on the opportunity.

A leftward realignment based on these trends would probably be gradual (like the right's decades-long climb to power after Barry Goldwater's crushing 1964 defeat) rather than sweeping (like the 1932 transformation beloved of students of realignment theory). But even slow-motion realignments require architects, and the memory of Ronald Reagan's role in the Republican revolution, in particular, is a reminder that having a message isn't enough; you need a messenger as well.

Twice in the past 25 years—in 1986 for the Democrats, in 1994 for the Republicans—an opposition party retook one or both houses of Congress, as the Democrats just did. Each party thought it had a governing majority within reach, but each lost the subsequent presidential election, riding a weak horse to defeat. Long-term trends make new majorities possible, and traumatic events (such as 9/11 and the Iraq War) can help catalyze their formation, but without effective leadership, the opportunities are easily squandered, whether on the campaign trail or in the White House. Just ask Karl Rove and George W. Bush. ▀

Many of the factors that allow a lasting majority to emerge are present in contemporary American politics.

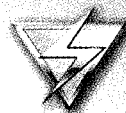
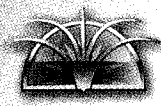
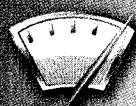
more enduring on the domestic front, where the gap between the left and the center-left has closed dramatically since the days when the two sides feuded bitterly over everything from free trade to health care to welfare reform.

On the one hand, you have *The New Republic*, the flagship magazine of centrist liberals, expressing regret for its role in derailing the Clinton health-care plan in the 1990s; on the other, you have the left-wing economist James Galbraith counseling readers of *The Nation* that “it's time to get over” the free-trade battles of the '90s and accept that both NAFTA and manufactured imports from China are here to stay. Protectionism and corporation bashing still find an audience, but even John Edwards, the progressives' darling in the '08 race, is running on an antipoverty platform that seeks to build on, rather than overturn, the welfare settlement of the mid-'90s, and is pushing a relatively market-friendly plan for universal health care. At the same time, many of the architects of Bill Clinton's deficit-cutting centrism—including

Populist rhetoric has never turned off as many voters as its (usually elite) detractors like to claim: Even in 2000, at the height of the boom years, Ralph Nader's far-left populism and Al Gore's center-left “people versus the powerful” rhetoric combined to win a clear majority of the popular vote. Today, after almost seven years of uneven economic performance, rising health-care costs, and outsize gains for the rich, support for increased welfare spending is higher than at any point since before the 1994 Republican revolution. The middle class isn't being immiserated, but even college-educated Americans have seen their incomes stagnate, and with the housing boom fizzling and foreclosure rates rising, it's not just the poor who find the idea of a stronger safety net more and more appealing.

These are the short-term trends that helped tip '06 to the Democrats; in the long term, a new-model populism's prospects look brighter still. The Republicans are to a large extent the party of married couples with children, while the Democrats are the party of unmarried voters,

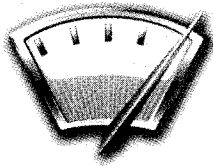
Ross Douthat is an Atlantic associate editor and the author of *Privilege: Harvard and the Education of the Ruling Class* (2005).



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1. EPA estimate. 2. EPA estimate. 3. EPA estimate. 4. EPA estimate. 5. EPA estimate. 6. EPA estimate. 7. EPA estimate. 8. EPA estimate. 9. EPA estimate. For more information or to find an E85 station near you, go to chevy.com/e85. 5 Based on EPA segmentation. 6 Based on EPA segmentation. 7 EPA estimate. 8 EPA estimate. 9 EPA estimate. EPA estimates for the 2008 Tahoe with Vortec 5.3L engine. EPA estimates for the 2008 Tahoe Hybrid not available at time of printing. 10 EPA estimate.



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What to watch for in the weeks ahead Calendar

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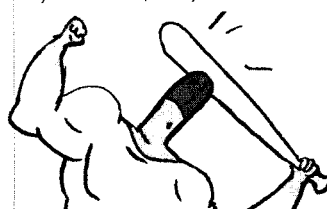
SEPT **Thick in the Middle Kingdom**

1 With great prosperity comes fat children, as China is learning. Beginning with the new school term today, China's education ministry requires a regimen of daily dancing. A 2005 survey found that the health of Chinese children had been declining for the previous two decades, and about 25 percent of boys in urban areas were overweight or obese. The program culminates in high school, when seniors learn to waltz.



SEPT **No Strings Attached**

7 The Air Guitar World Championships, an orgy of heavy-metal camp, happen today in Oulu, Finland. Pantomime shredders perform one-minute frenzies before a panel of judges. Air roadies are permitted, but must leave the stage before the show. The winner gets a real guitar.



SEPT **Bats and Rats**

7 Kirk "Murdoch" Radomski, a former New York Mets batboy alleged to have supplied steroids to Major League Baseball players, is sentenced for drug dealing and money laundering today. After his steroid ring was broken up in 2005, Radomski struck a deal and investigators learned his clients' names (they haven't been made public). He faces up to 25 years and \$500,000 in fines.

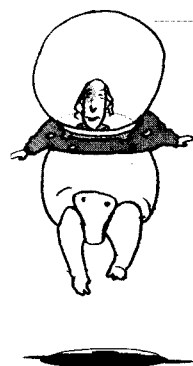


SEPT **Our Man in Panama**

9 Manuel Noriega was many things: CIA asset, Panamanian dictator, and then inmate #38699-079. Today, he's free—at least for now. Initially sentenced to 40 years for drug trafficking and money laundering, he'll leave his Miami prison after only 15 years (good behavior was a factor). But he'll face an unwelcoming reception in Panama, where he was convicted in absentia of murder.

SEPT **The Maestro's Memoir**

17 Investors, buckle up. Alan Greenspan, the former Fed chairman whose comments, even in retirement, can lower the Dow, publishes his memoir today, which reportedly fetched an \$8 million-plus advance. *The Age of Turbulence* was planned as a straightforward autobiography, but instead Greenspan wrote an analysis of his career and the future of the economy. He promises lots of surprises—and already has delivered one, announcing that he wrote much of the book in the bathtub.



SEPT **Diaper Dandy**

24 Lisa Nowak, the allegedly bediapered astronaut who drove from Houston to Florida to confront a romantic rival, goes on trial in Orlando today for attempted kidnapping, and burglary with assault and battery.

SEPT **Bodies and Ballots**

25 Today's presidential election in Lebanon will likely inflame tensions between the country's pro- and anti-Syrian contingents. The latter has lost strength as its parliamentary members have been killed off. The vote could splinter the government, with both camps claiming power.

SEPT **To the Viktors Go the Spoils**

30 Ukraine's bloodless pro-Western coup in 2004 has given way to a stalemate between President Viktor Yushchenko and Russia-aligned rival Viktor Yanukovich. Yanukovich was defeated in 2004 but returned as prime minister and head of a parliamentary majority. Their camps vie for power in today's parliamentary election.

SEPT **Anglican Schism?**

30 The last chance for the Anglican Church to avoid a schism could come today with a deadline for the American Episcopal Church to abandon its increasingly tolerant positions on gays—it has not recanted its support of gay unions and gay bishops or allowed conservative churches to break away.

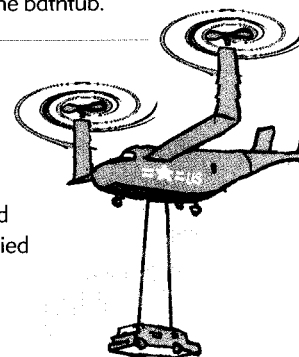
ALSO IN SEPTEMBER

Osprey Leaves the Nest

After \$20 billion and more than 20 years, the world's first production tilt-rotor aircraft, the V-22 Osprey, will be deployed to Iraq this month. The project has suffered from massive cost overruns and casualties; 30 people died during testing. Critics predict that performance problems and design flaws will make the Osprey vulnerable or unfit for many battles. The military still likes it and plans to spend another \$50 billion on the program.

Army of One?

With the Iraq War in its fifth year, President Bush and his supporters face an important milestone when General David Petraeus testifies before Congress this month on whether the troop "surge" has worked. Petraeus has hinted he'll ask for more time to see results; a growing Republican contingent is threatening to abandon Bush and call for withdrawal.



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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Osirak and a Hard Place

In 1981, when Saddam Hussein was just months away from starting up a nuclear reactor, Israeli fighter planes destroyed Iraq's nuclear-production facility at Osirak. Could a similar Israeli strike neutralize Iran's atomic ambitions? A recent paper published in *International Security* assesses this possibility, and the authors conclude that Israeli air power remains an effective "counter-proliferation tool" that could be deployed successfully against Iran. They estimate that an Israeli strike force would be able to penetrate Iranian air defenses without suffering so much "attrition" that the mission would fail. They issued this finding, however, with several caveats. Iran learned from the strike on Osirak: The

critical parts of its nuclear facilities are hardened, dispersed, and well concealed. An air attack couldn't destroy the entire program; instead, Israeli planners would have to prioritize targets directly involved in bomb production. And the success of a strike would hinge on the reliability of intelligence—a great unknown in any analysis. Finally, the ramifications of any attack, successful or not, could make the military option unattractive. World opinion could swing against the attacker, as it did in the case of Osirak. Perhaps more important, Iran is in a position to retaliate by stepping up support for insurgents in Iraq and for Hezbollah in Lebanon.

—"Osirak Redux? Assessing Israeli Capabilities to Destroy Iranian Nuclear Facilities," Whitney Raas and Austin Long, *International Security*



NOW WE KNOW what he's thinking.

PSYCHOLOGY

What a John Wants

Among men who pay for sex, the repeat customers tend to have the most enlightened attitudes toward women, according to an analysis of johns conducted by four economics professors. Drawing on a survey of 1,342 men arrested for solicitation in four Western U.S. cities, the authors found that men who frequent prostitutes tend to be slightly older and much better educated than the average American male, they have less sex but more partners, and (as you might expect) they have unhappier marriages. The authors split the johns into two categories: regular customers and "experimenters," who claim to have been with a sex worker at most once before being arrested. Regulars are more likely to view going to prostitutes as a way to have sex without bothering with conventional relationships, and they claim to enjoy sexual variety and tend to be less interested in control during sex. Experimenters are more likely to view visits to prostitutes as a complement to stable relationships, and they tend to have more-negative views of both prostitutes and women in general. Overall, 74 percent reported that they always wear a condom (men with stable relationships were less likely to use protection, at least with prostitutes).

—"What Money Buys: Clients of Street Sex Workers in the U.S.," Marina Della Giusta, Maria Laura Di Tommaso, Isilda Shima, and Steinar Strøm, *Applied Economics*



ECONOMICS

Pound-Wise, Peso-Foolish

Before the Mexican government removed three zeros from its currency in 1993, anyone who wanted to know what it felt like to be a millionaire could hop across the Rio Grande and convert dollars into pesos. But tourists should beware: According to a study by three marketing professors, feeling like a millionaire tends to make you spend like one. The authors asked subjects in Hong Kong to imagine living on an after-tax budget of 9,000 Hong Kong dollars a month and to estimate how much they would pay each month for things like eating out, shopping for clothes, and going to movies and bars. The subjects were then asked to imagine living

on 500 "Tristania" dollars, a fictional currency worth 18 Hong Kong dollars apiece—a budget equal in real value to their Hong Kong budget. When drawing up budgets, the subjects scrimped and saved their Tristania dollars but spent their Hong Kong dollars much more freely. This effect reversed when the authors made the Tristania dollars the less-valuable currency. This "money illusion" may explain Europeans' false perception that prices rose dramatically when the euro replaced zero-laden currencies like the Portuguese escudo and the Italian lira.

—"On the Perceived Value of Money: The Reference Dependence of Currency Numerosity Effects," Klaus Wertenbroch, Dilip Soman, and Amitava Chattopadhyay, *Journal of Consumer Research*

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Indiana University: Bloomington **Recalling Vietnam: A Conversation with Photographer Jeffrey A. Wolin and Vets**

August 31st, 5:30 pm | artmuseum.iu.edu

A fascinating discussion about the intersections of art and historical memory is presented by the IU Art Museum. Photographer Jeffrey A. Wolin will lead an informal panel conversation with Vietnam War veterans about their wartime experiences, their lives after the war, and the process of revisiting these memories while being interviewed and photographed. Monica Kozlowski, special assistant to Senator Richard Lugar, will present opening remarks on the Veterans History Project. Following the discussion will be a reception and book signing at the IU Art Museum.



University of Illinois: Champagne Urbana **Plato's Timaeus Today: "One Book, The Whole Universe"**

September 13-16 | timaeus.uiuc.edu

This dynamic weekend will focus on the lessons and relevance of Plato's dialogue on creation, the physical world, and the cosmic place of humanity. Attendees of the free conference will hear leading scholars in Physics, Architecture, and Philosophy speak on topics as diverse as "Time and Celestial Dynamics" and "Love and Beauty in Plato's Symposium", and will have opportunities to engage these thinkers and to view special collection exhibits during afternoon and evening receptions.

City University of New York Queens College and Focus the Nation: New York **CUNY Climate Change Science Lecture Series: "Oil, Law, and Sustainability in the Amazon Rainforest"**

September 1st, 12:30 pm | qc.cuny.edu/

In association with Focus the Nation, a national teach-in program on the issue of climate change, Queens College presents Dr. Judith Kimmerling. Dr. Kimmerling, author of National Resources Defense Council's report "Amazon Crude", will bring her multifaceted perspective to a complex and compelling sustainability issue and share her expertise in the politics of Amazon rain forest and international development, human rights, environmental law and politics, and energy law.



Carnegie Mellon Regina Gouger Miller Gallery: Pittsburgh **Nakashima Revealed: The Carnegie Mellon Collection**

August 31st, 5 pm | millergallery.cfa.cmu.edu

Carnegie Mellon's Regina Gouger Miller Gallery brings together a collection of works by master craftsman and peace activist George Nakashima. The opening reception will highlight the art and life of the artist, interned in the Idaho desert during the Second World War. The exhibit sheds light into themes of cultural exchange and reconciliation in Nakashima's work, whose exceptional Peace Altars have been displayed at The Hague Appeal for Peace, the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City, and "The City of Peace" in Auroville, India.

Duke University Center for International Studies: Durham **Global Governance and Democracy**

September 11th, 5:30 pm | jhfc.duke.edu/ducis/

Duke brings Robert O. Keohane, Professor of International Affairs at Princeton University, to North Carolina as part of its interdisciplinary seminar series focused understanding the causes and consequences of recent global economic and socio-political changes. The seminar, co-chaired by Duke faculty in Political Science and Public Policy, will engage the relevant and critical question of how globalization affects the distribution of wealth and well being, as well as governance among and within nations.

University of Louisville: Kentucky **Ancient Synagogues in the Land of Israel**

September 4th, 6:00 pm | art.louisville.edu/morganlecture/



What did the synagogues in which Jesus and Paul preached look like? In this slide-illustrated lecture, visiting Morgan Chair Jodi Magness, the Kenan Distinguished Professor for Teaching Excellence in Early Judaism at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, will survey the archaeological remains of ancient synagogues of the Roman and Byzantine periods in Palestine (modern Israel, Jordan, and the Palestinian territories). This excursion into religion and ancient art history

is part of the Allen R. Hite Art Institute's Morgan Lecture Series.

Iowa State University: Ames **Where Have All the Soldiers Gone? The Transformation of Modern Europe**

September 13th, 8:00 pm | lectures.iastate.edu/

James Sheehan, Professor of the Humanities and senior fellow of the Institute for International Studies will share his perspectives on the widening rift between the U.S. and Europe in this Phi Beta Kappa lecture. An eminent historian, Sheehan's latest book of the same title analyzes the relationship between the rejection of violence in postwar Europe and the transformational evolution of social stability and material welfare across the continent.

University of Utah College of Health: Salt Lake City **AIDs Intervention for At Risk Youth**

September 7th, 9:00 am | events.utah.edu

The University of Utah's College of Health Research Symposium will feature Drs. Linda Caldwell and Ed Smith from The Pennsylvania State University as its keynote lecturers. The two speakers bring their diverse backgrounds- Dr. Caldwell is a park and recreation professor and Dr. Smith specializes in youth counseling- to the salient issue of HIV and at-risk youth. Drs. Caldwell and Smith will be discussing their creative and inspired work in Cape Town, South Africa using recreation as an intervention.



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ROMANCE

Let's Get Physical

Not content with having perfected (at least in their own minds) the language of love, the French are now fine-tuning its body language as well. A researcher at the University of South Brittany enlisted a good-looking 20-year-old male to hit on 120 randomly chosen women at a nightclub in Vannes. "Hello. My name's Antoine," he would say. "Do you want to dance?" Then the researcher did another experiment, in which three other Frenchmen accosted 240 young women on the street and asked them for their phone numbers. In both cases, the cruising Frenchmen found that women were much more receptive if touched lightly on the forearm. At the

nightclub, 43 percent of the women who hadn't been touched agreed to dance, compared with 65 percent of the women who had been touched. On the street, one in five women agreed to divulge their numbers after being touched—double the number who agreed without a touch. Other studies seem to confirm the researcher's hunch that women find touchy men more "dominant" and therefore higher-status and more attractive. He cautions, however, that North America is a less tactile culture, and that a positive response to discreet pawing by a stranger may, in fact, just be a French thing.

—"Courtship Compliance: The Effect of Touch on Women's Behavior," Nicolas Guéguen, *Social Influence*



LAW ENFORCEMENT

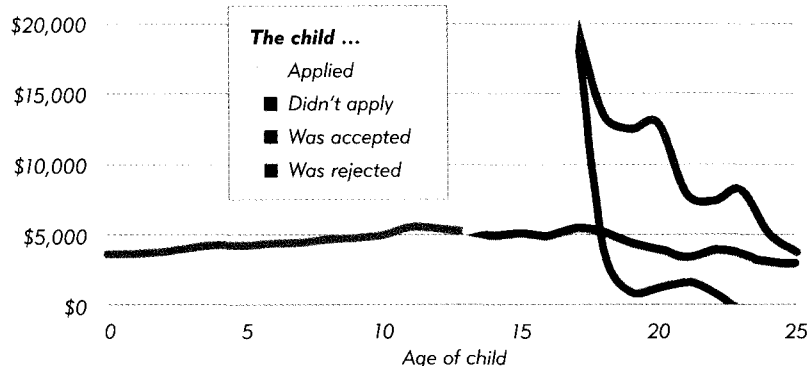
Shooting in Black and White

With their fingers on their triggers, police officers are less influenced by a target's race than recent well-covered shootings of unarmed black men might suggest. A team of researchers put several officers and a sampling of civilians in front of a screen on which 100 images popped up: Half were of black men and half of white men, and each appeared once holding a gun and a second time holding a harmless object like a cell phone. The officers and the civilians had two buttons they could push—one if they thought shooting was warranted, the other if they thought it wasn't. Both groups showed clear signs of bias: When they were shown either an unarmed black man or an armed white man, they took longer to respond, by an average of 10 to 20 milliseconds. But the police were able to ignore race when deciding whether to fire. They shot about 13 percent of the unarmed men, regardless of their race; the civilians shot about 35 percent of the unarmed blacks and nearly 29 percent of the unarmed whites. Other research suggests that police are rougher with black suspects—they're nearly five times more likely than whites to die at the hands of cops—but this study concludes that we might be able to outthink our prejudices.

—"Across the Thin Blue Line: Police Officers and Racial Bias in the Decision to Shoot," Joshua Correll et al., *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*

A Leg Up?

How a child's application status affects parents' giving to an alma mater



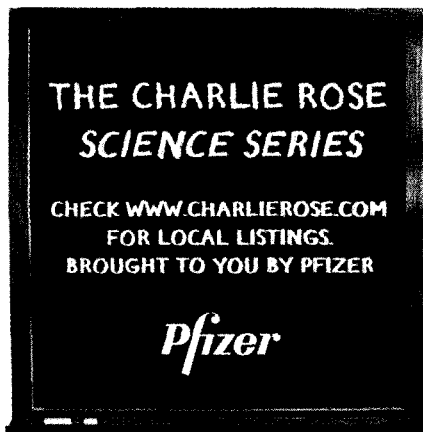
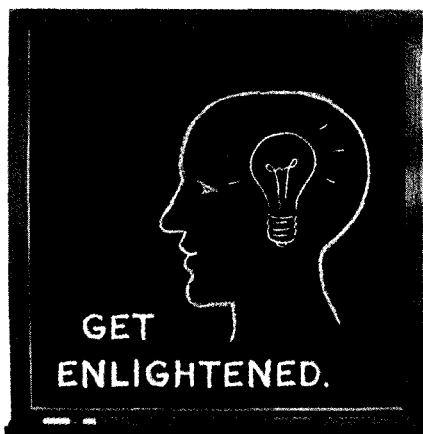
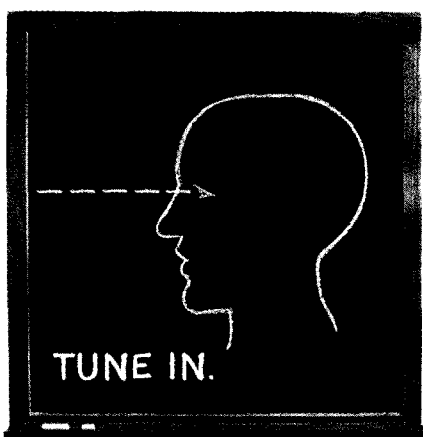
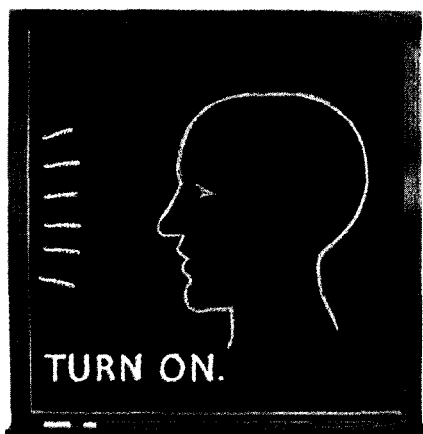
EDUCATION

The Old College Buy

What moves alumni when they write checks to their alma maters? Altruism? School spirit? Getting the kids accepted? Largely the last, suggests a new study from the National Bureau of Economic Research: Based on the (perhaps mistaken) perception that cash will grease the wheels at the admissions office, alumni are more likely to be generous to their former school when their kids are applying. The authors studied the donation patterns of 32,488 alumni of a selective university they dub Anon U, using mountains of data provided by the school's development office. They reasoned that if alumni hoped for a quid pro quo, their donations would fluctuate according to three variables: the age of their children, whether or not their children apply to

the school, and the results of the application process. The researchers note that this is a high-stakes game: Alumni contributed \$7.1 billion to higher education in 2004–05. The study reveals that graduates with children are about 13 percent more likely to give back to their schools and that they tend to give more as their children approach college age. But donations among this group decline after an admissions decision has been made—and plummet if their kids aren't accepted. Though the authors note that alumni without a stake in the cycle still often give generously, many alums who are parents "believe that donations buy them entrance into a lottery whose prize is admissions for their children."

—"Altruism and the Child-Cycle of Alumni Giving," Jonathan Meer and Harvey S. Rosen, *National Bureau of Economic Research*



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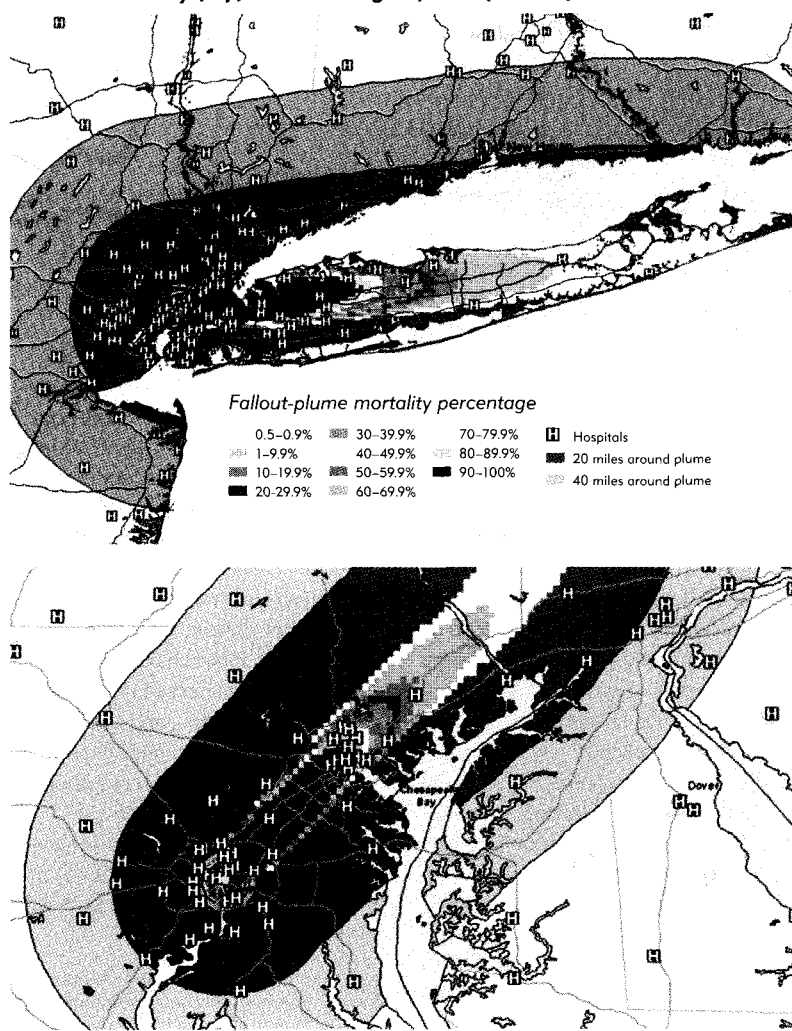
HOMELAND SECURITY The Fire Next Time

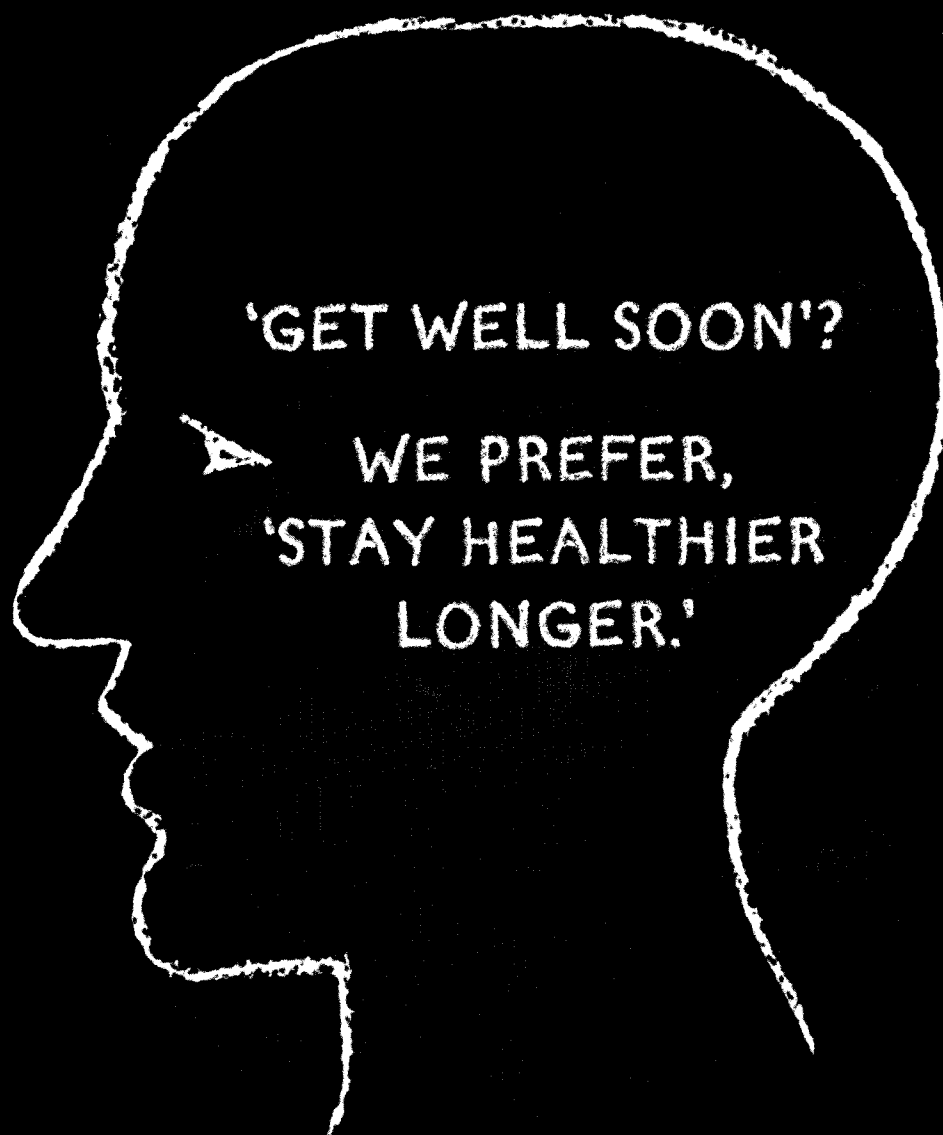
A nuclear attack would quickly overwhelm emergency-response teams in any city, but some cities' medical facilities are positioned directly in the line of fire, putting their response capabilities at grave risk, according to a report that uses computer simulations to compare blasts in Atlanta, Chicago, New York, and Washington. All four cities would find their main hospitals obliterated: The blast of a smallish, 20-kiloton tactical nuke would shatter windows 11 miles away; that of a 550-kiloton strategic weapon—the most common size in the Russian arsenal—would shatter windows 33 miles away. Lake Michigan would absorb much of the heat in Chicago, and the city's

sprawl would allow many of its hospitals to survive the plume of radioactive fallout after a tactical strike. In the more densely packed New York, the blast and heat of either a tactical or strategic strike would be devastating, and the fallout plume would stretch to the end of Long Island. In an attack on Washington, the fallout would be carried north and east, and in the case of a 550-kiloton detonation, the fallout plume would knock out medical facilities all the way to Baltimore. Time of day and weather are also factors; snow and rain clouds reflect radiation, spreading its harmful effect.

—"Vulnerability of Populations and the Urban Health Care Systems to Nuclear Weapon Attack—Examples From Four American Cities," William C. Bell and Cham E. Dallas, *International Journal of Health Geographics*

Fallout From a 550-Kiloton Nuclear Attack on New York City (top) and Washington, D.C. (bottom)





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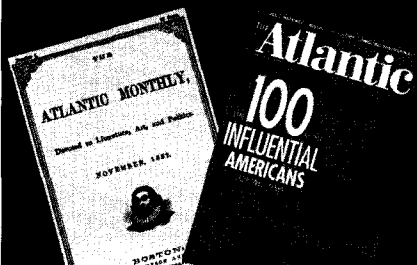
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WHERE TERRORISTS
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TERRORISM **Thick as Thieves**

Terrorists are turning more and more to crime to fund violence, according to a report from the Congressional Research Service. A variety of factors play into this trend, notably the declining support of state sponsors and the increasing number of amateurs forming small, autonomous terror cells. While the most-lethal groups have been well financed, even small-time crime can provide enough money for a spectacular attack: The 9/11 hijackings cost about \$500,000, but the July 7 London bombings cost only about \$15,000. Oddly enough, religious groups may be more likely than political groups to turn to crime, since their

sense of divine mission helps them convince themselves that any means is morally acceptable. (Islamic terrorists also find wiggle room by calling their depredations "economic jihad.") Authorities suspect that profits from the sale of South American cocaine, Moroccan hashish, and Afghan opium support terror, but terrorist groups have also stooped to counterfeiting, bootlegging Viagra, sticking up jewelry stores, and heisting infant formula. The most creative? The two would-be suicide bombers who hoped to fund their trip to Iraq by faking a death and collecting on a \$1 million life-insurance policy.

—"Terrorist Precursor Crimes: Issues and Options for Congress," Siobhan O'Neil, Congressional Research Service

MEDICINE **Pull the Plug, HAL**

Computers can already beat you at chess; now it might be time to start letting them decide whether you should live or die. A paper by researchers at the National Institutes of Health suggests that the system for determining how to treat comatose patients might work better if the decision making fell to a computer program. Currently, if a patient has no living will, doctors in most states rely on the next of kin to guess what measures, if any, the patient would want taken. But studies show that your loved ones accurately predict your wishes only about 68 percent of the time, and the percentage doesn't improve even when the patient has selected in advance which relative or friend should decide. The

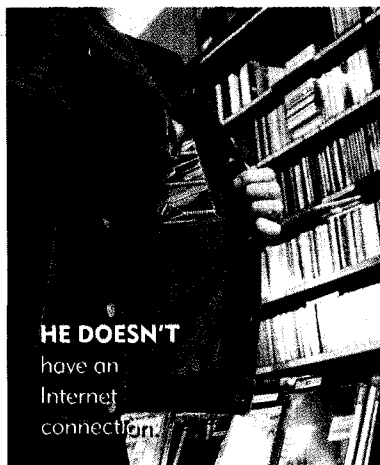
NIH researchers suggest that doctors could enter their patient's circumstances and demographic characteristics into a program that runs comparisons with similar patients whose wishes are known: In the study, it predicted what an individual patient would want just as well as the patient's next of kin. A doctor treating a comatose, 68-year-old, black, college-educated widower, for example, might be more likely to conform to the patient's wishes by relying on the typical treatment preferences of older, black, college-educated widowers than by consulting the patient's children.

—"How Should Treatment Decisions Be Made for Incapacitated Patients, and Why?" David I. Shalowitz, Elizabeth Garrett-Mayer, and David Wendler, PLoS Medicine

TECHNOLOGY

A Victimless Crime?

The recording industry can stop blaming sagging sales and profits on online pirates: They're cheapskates who probably wouldn't have bought the albums they downloaded, according to an economic analysis of file-sharing and album sales. The study's authors focused on the impact of Germany on downloads and sales in the fall of 2002: A sixth of all U.S. downloads are from German sharers, and during German school holidays—when kids are at home, online, and sharing their collections—the supply of pirated music available to U.S. listeners balloons, making downloading quicker and easier for Americans. But the authors found that albums that debuted in the U.S. when German kids were on holiday sold just as well as albums that debuted when German kids were in school. (They estimate the maximum number of album sales lost to piracy each week



at no more than 368 copies.) Declining to endorse or condemn music pirates, the authors nevertheless point out that the net effect of piracy seems to be beneficial: The recording industry loses little or no money, and millions of American and German tightwads get their music for free.

—"The Effect of File Sharing on Record Sales," Felix Oberholzer-Gee and Koleman Strumpf, *Journal of Political Economy*

SEXUALITY

The Unkindest Cut

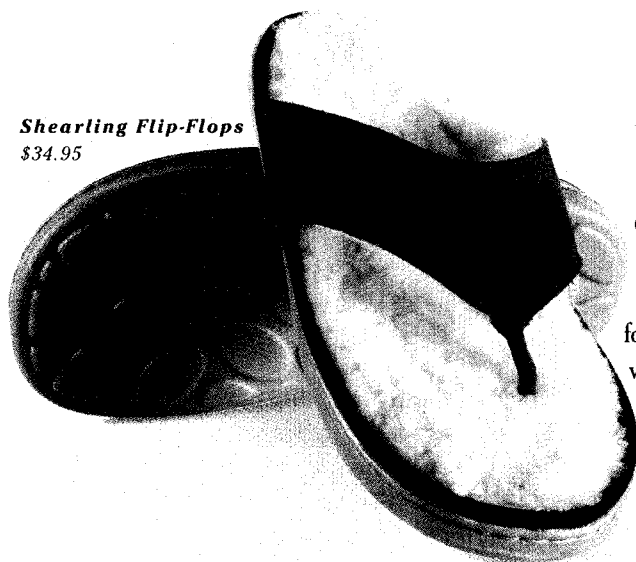
More and more American boys are hanging on to their foreskins, according to data from the National Health and Social Life Survey, published in a British journal. From a peak of nearly 90 percent in the early 1960s, the circumcision rate dropped to about 57 percent by 2004. (Recently arrived Asian and Latino immigrants prefer to leave infants uncircumcised.) Another study in the same journal suggests that men without foreskins should envy their uncut peers: A research team found that five of the most sensitive spots on an uncircumcised penis are removed during circumcision. Each of them is more ticklish than the most sensitive spot on a circumcised penis: the scar where the foreskin was cut away.

—National Health and Social Life Survey; "Fine-Touch Pressure Thresholds in the Adult Penis," Morris L. Sorrells et al., *British Journal of Urology International*

For links to the documents discussed in this section, visit www.theatlantic.com/doc/200709/primarysources.

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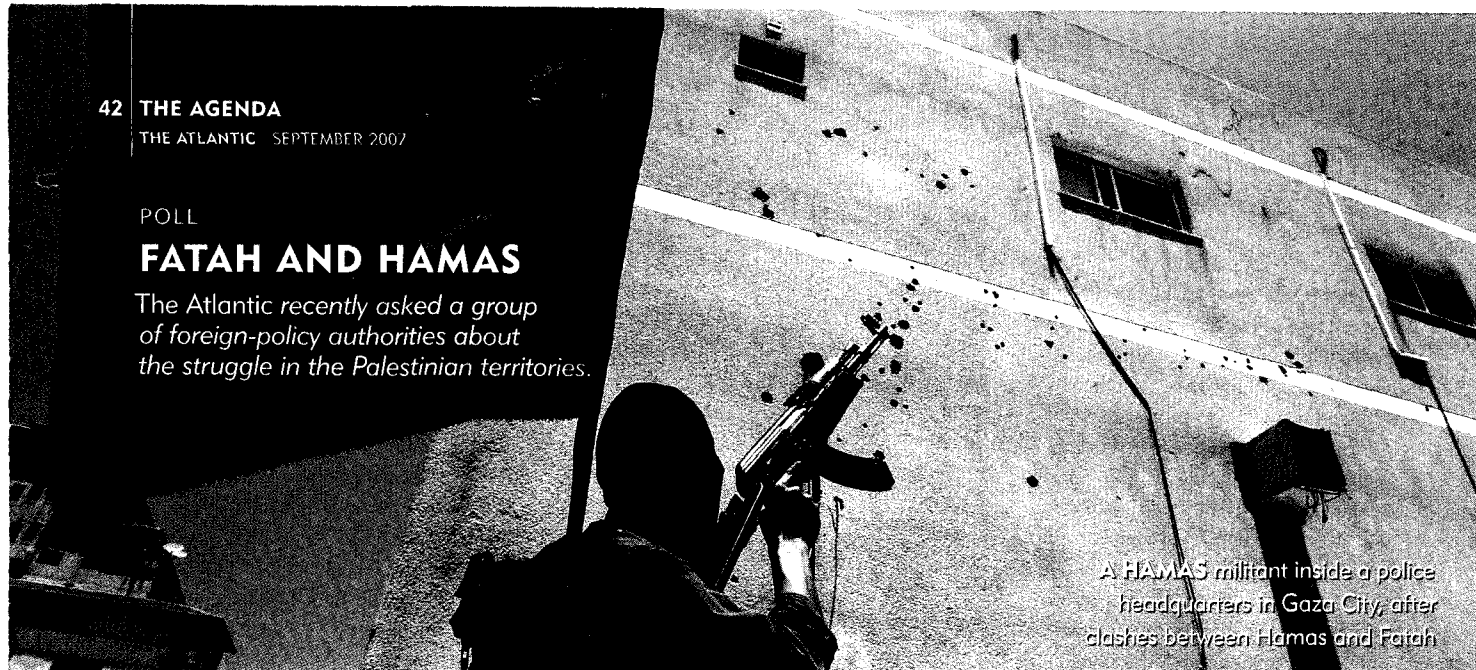
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POLL

FATAH AND HAMAS

The Atlantic recently asked a group of foreign-policy authorities about the struggle in the Palestinian territories.



A HAMAS militant inside a police headquarters in Gaza City, after clashes between Hamas and Fatah

Q: What is the likelihood of two separate, self-governing Palestinian territories emerging from the current conflict?

45% Highly unlikely

"The West Bank and Gaza together constitute a minimally viable state; if separated, neither is likely to succeed."

"Two separate territories administered by rival parties would create an inherently unstable environment. It might be a transitional phenomenon, but not a stable, long-term condition."

"The paradox is that only Hamas has (electoral) legitimacy in most Palestinians' eyes, but Gaza is not a self-sustainable entity. Conversely, the West Bank ... (together with Jerusalem) is the heart of Palestinian identity and the only credible basis for a durable Palestinian entity. But it is ruled by the remnant of a largely discredited and corrupt Fatah oligarchy."

36% Somewhat likely

"This will be a temporary situation; over time the two structures will consolidate."

"It's hard to imagine Israel accepting two separate states if there's any way they can avoid it—but they may not be able to do so."

18% Highly likely

"The Palestinians never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity. They are perhaps the worst-governed people in the Middle East."

Q: How should the United States approach the current situation in the Palestinian territories?

50% Work to engage and unite the two factions

"The 'two-state solution' of separate entities in Gaza and the West Bank reflects current reality and is a tempting basis on which to try to mount a new effort at building Palestinian institutions. An impoverished and isolated Hamastan in Gaza would be inherently unstable, however. [And] a Hamas that is denied its goal of contending for power over all Palestinians also would still be a disruptive force in the West Bank."

"Isolating Hamas has failed and will continue to fail. Especially since its recent success in freeing the BBC journalist [Alan Johnston]—something Fatah failed to even attempt, much less achieve—Hamas has growing credibility in Arab eyes. Separating the two halves of Palestine may be the Israeli strategy (myopic and cynical), but if the U.S. adopts it for its own, we shall just further weaken our standing in the region and be treated as a pawn of Likud."

"We should engage both, but I seriously doubt we can resolve the dispute and unite the factions. They have a struggle ahead, and our uneven involvement will only distort the outcome."

25% Treat Hamas and Fatah as two separate governments

"I'd stress ties with Fatah and keep lines of communications open to Hamas through the EU, and see if Fatah can remain viable."

16% Wait until a clear victor emerges

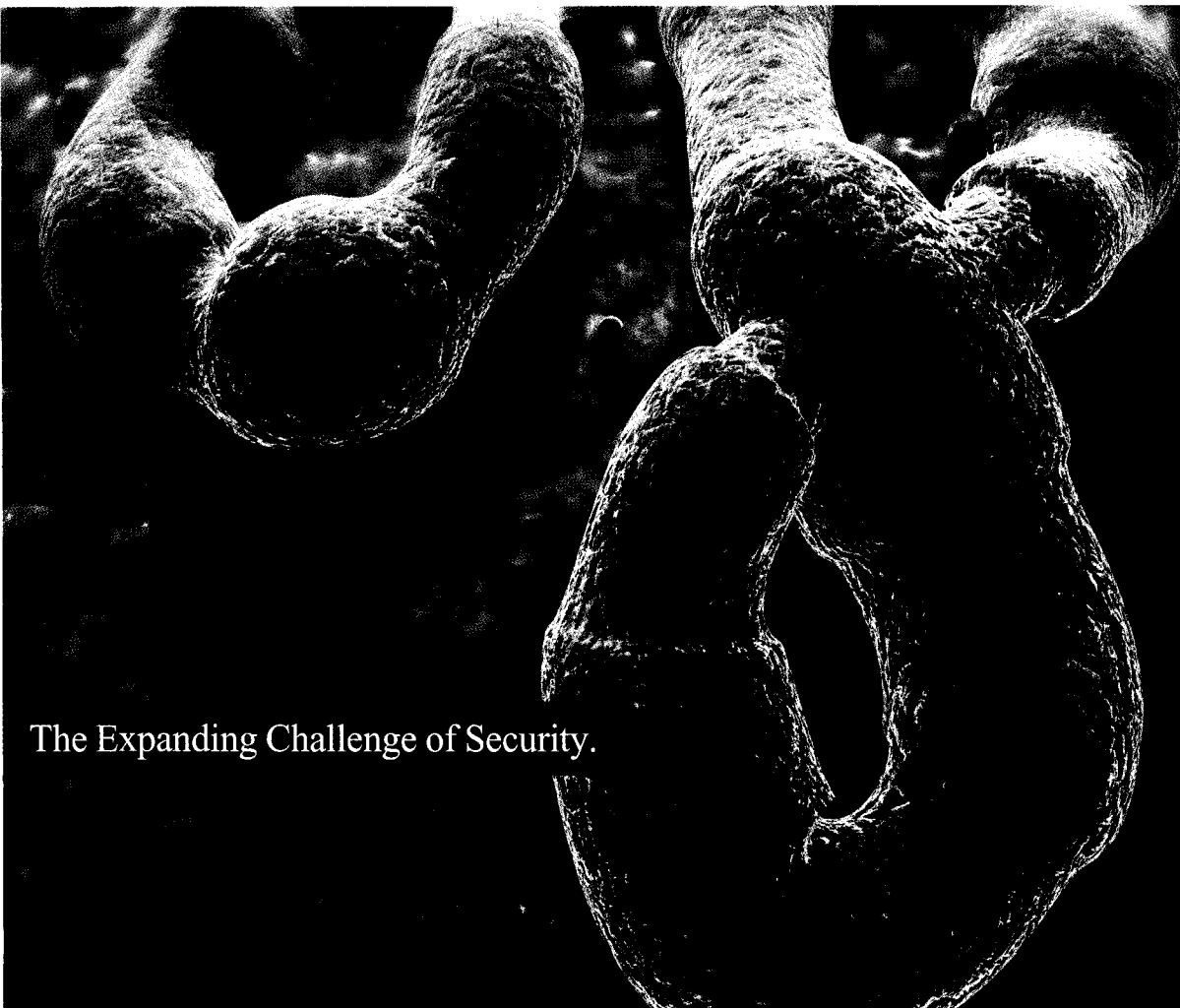
"Leave it alone. Let the conflict burn itself out. Interference [only] delays the process."

9% Treat Fatah as a legitimate government and isolate Hamas [volunteered by respondents]

"Engage supportively with Fatah as a separate legitimate government, and Hamas as a breakaway entity with no legitimate standing."

PARTICIPANTS (44): Graham Allison, Ronald Asmus, Samuel Berger, Daniel Blumenthal, Max Boot, Stephen Bosworth, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Daniel Byman, Warren Christopher, Wesley Clark, Richard Clarke, Ivo Daalder, Lawrence Eagleburger, Douglas Feith, Jay Garner, Leslie Gelb, Marc Grossman, John Hamre, Gary Hart, Bruce Hoffman, Laura Holgate, John Hulsman, Robert Hunter, Tony Judt, David Kay, Andrew Krepinevich, Charles Kupchan, John Lehman, James Lindsay, Edward Luttwak, Jessica Mathews, John McLaughlin, Richard Myers, William Nash, Joseph Nye, Carlos Pascual, Thomas Pickering, Paul Pillar, Kenneth Pollack, Joseph Ralston, Wendy Sherman, Anne-Marie Slaughter, James Steinberg, Anthony Zinni. Because of rounding, percentages do not always total 100.

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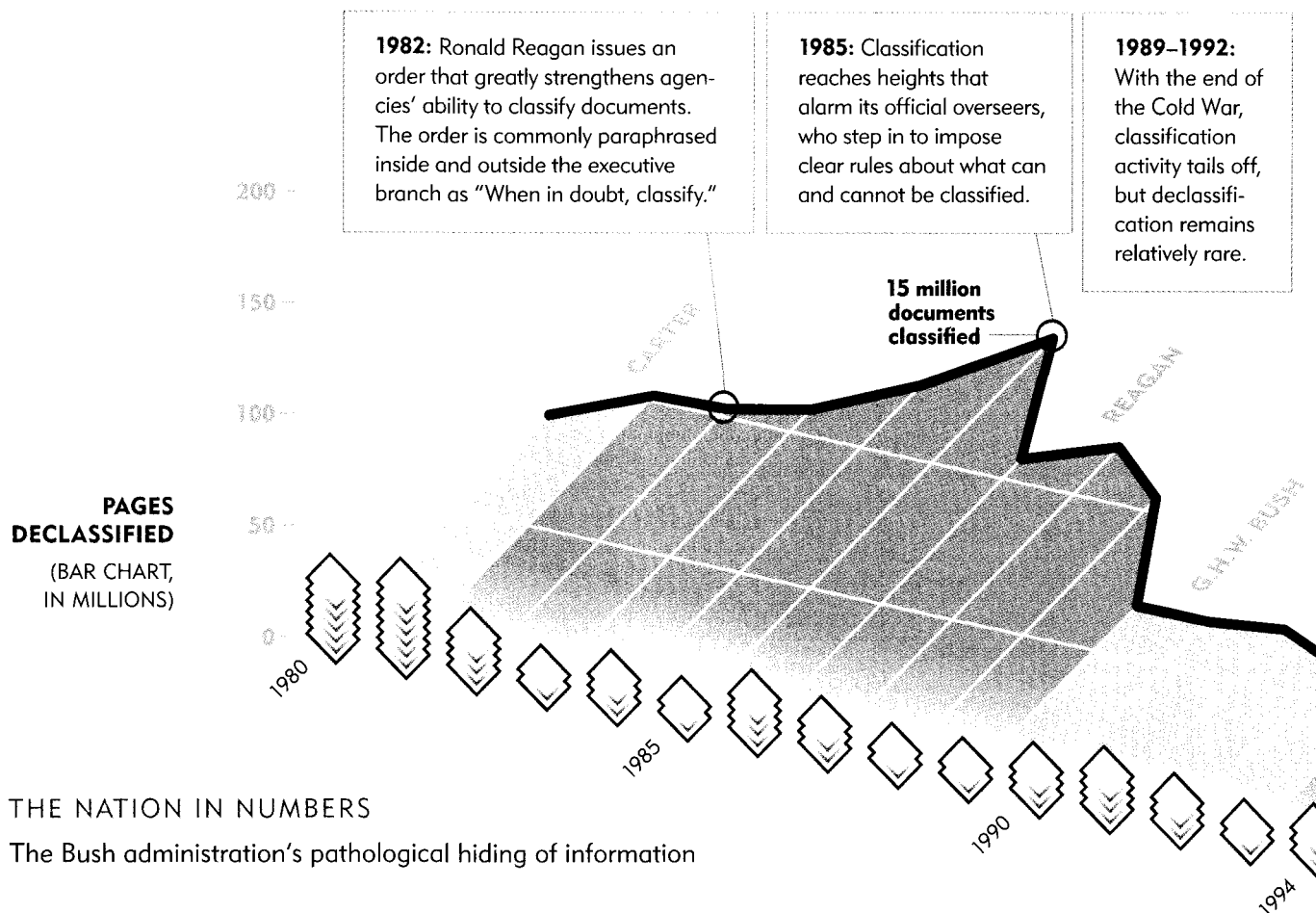
Pandemic. Whether a random natural occurrence or a deliberate act of terrorism, the prevention and control of disease remains a keystone in protecting the health and security of our nation. Public health agencies depend on massive amounts of information to support their mission. Requiring enterprise-wide IT solutions that will help deliver key service and support — and forward thinking that will help them meet this expanding challenge of security.

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Classify This

BY GRAEME WOOD

The Bush administration conducts much of its work in the shadows. "Black site" detentions, extraordinary renditions, and domestic eavesdropping all happen in secret, and only by the grace of leaks and slipups do we know they happen at all.

Most secrets stay secret. But for the last quarter century, at least we've known how many secrets were being kept, because of the Information Security Oversight Office, or ISOO, an internal government watchdog that keeps tabs on secrecy standards and the number of documents classified each year. Its data show that the shadows have been getting darker and bigger lately, and are now at least the size of those at the height of the Cold War.

In 2006 alone, the Bush administration classified no fewer than 20.6 million documents, up from ISOO's recorded low of 3.6 million in the Clinton era. At that rate, with an average document length of 10 pages, the executive branch could fill an archive the size of the Library of Congress in just 40 years.

Secrecy always grows during wartime, and the recent jump owes much to Iraq and Afghanistan. But classification also follows the rhythms of domestic politics. Information is power, so the saying goes, and executive-branch secrecy has the effect of hiding activities from Congress.

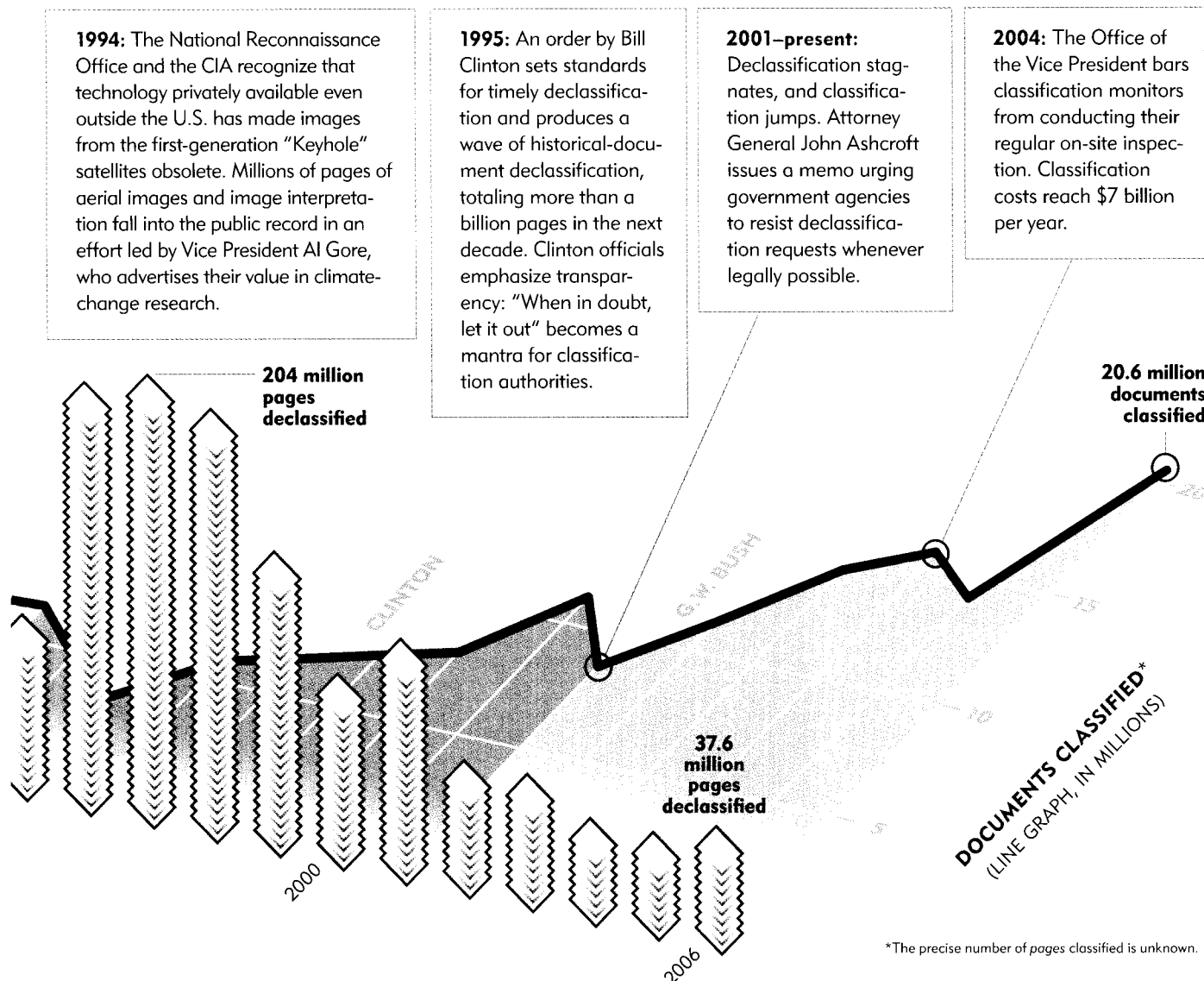
The pace of classification can vary finely, even in individual government agencies, according to which party holds the White House and which

holds the House of Representatives. For instance, the Department of Defense, whose employees tend to vote Republican, classifies zealously under Republican presidents, and even more when the Democrats control the House.

The oversight office monitors these trends and advises the president if classification efforts are threatening national security. But starting in 2003, the White House became the government's most flagrant scofflaw: The Office of the Vice President simply stopped reporting how many staffers had the authority to classify and how often they exercised that power.

Recent administrations have differed over how much secrecy is best. Ronald Reagan ordered agencies to err on the side of caution; Bill Clinton urged them

SOURCES: INFORMATION SECURITY OVERSIGHT OFFICE; NATIONAL SECURITY ARCHIVE
AT GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY; GRAPHIC BY RYAN MORRIS



to classify sparingly. But some observers say this administration's commitment to secrecy stands out. Then—Attorney General John Ashcroft issued a government-wide memo in 2001 pledging the Justice Department's support for all legally defensible efforts to resist Freedom of Information Act requests. Thomas Blanton, who heads the National Security Archive, says, "A single query has animated all the choices this White House has made: Does this decision enhance presidential power or not? And if it increases presidential power, they go and do it."

Leaving aside the blinkering effect it has on congressional oversight, too much secrecy impedes the routine functioning of the executive branch, by making useful information difficult for many

government employees to see. It also makes leaks—both intentional and accidental—more likely, as civil servants take the top-secret stamp less seriously and lose track of what's restricted.

Ironically, the vice president's office itself has provided evidence of this latter danger. Representative Henry Waxman, the Democratic chair of the House Oversight Committee, has pointed out that Dick Cheney's office has been involved in at least three major leaks since 2003: disclosing parts of the National Intelligence Estimate, passing secret information to coup plotters in the Philippines, and revealing Valerie Plame's identity. "It would appear particularly irresponsible," Waxman wrote to Cheney in June, "to give an office with your history of

security breaches an exemption" from government-wide regulations concerning classified information.

Even John Bolton, the former undersecretary of state and U.S. representative to the United Nations—and a defender of extensive classification—acknowledges that the current classification environment is chaotic and likely to produce breaches. In a letter urging leniency for former vice-presidential chief of staff I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby, Bolton wrote, "It was frequently hard to know who was cleared to see what or what could be discussed with whom. If there is anyone who fully understands our 'system' for protecting classified information, I have yet to meet him." 

Graeme Wood is an Atlantic staff editor.

FIRST PRINCIPLES

Is private equity just another bubble, or a sign of sickness in America's public stock markets?

Cashing Out

BY CLIVE CROOK

The private-equity business isn't new, but the attention it's lately been getting sure is. Carlyle, Blackstone, and some of the industry's other leading firms have been around for more than 20 years. For most of this time, doing whatever it is they do, these companies conducted themselves with painstaking discretion and, so far as public opinion was concerned, operated invisibly. No longer. In the past year or two, the public has realized that private equity's footprint on American business and finance is huge. People have also noticed—partly because the industry's leaders have been foolish enough to show them—just how much money some of its executives are making.

For reasons I will come to in a moment, no one can be sure whether private equity is going to soar even higher or fall to earth. If it does the former, this means that something has gone wrong with America's model of corporate capitalism. But if it does the latter, the history of its downfall will partly write itself: Two events in 2007 will irresistibly be seen as moments when the wings began smoldering.

The first was a birthday party. Stephen Schwarzman, co-founder of Blackstone, celebrated turning 60 in February with a Manhattan bash of arresting opulence. A giant portrait of the host, which ordinarily hangs (it was explained) in his living room, formed the centerpiece. The press reported the event in drooling detail. If Schwarzman's purpose was to draw attention to his wealth, it worked. Politicians, financial regulators, and the Internal Revenue Service all surely took



A TRADER CALLS out the anticipated price for Blackstone's initial public offering at the New York Stock Exchange on June 22, 2007.

note. When people joked that it was the most expensive party in history, they weren't thinking of the catering.

The other event was Blackstone's initial public offering, in June. Schwarzman had decided that this was a good time to cash out some of his gains. That was telling in itself, of course, since the firm had hitherto emphasized the drawbacks of a public listing. Whether or not the IPO signaled a peak in valuation—or at any rate a loss of future momentum—it required disclosure. Legal documents showed that in 2006, Schwarzman was paid \$400 million, that he expected to receive nearly \$700 million from the IPO, and that his remaining stake in the firm would be worth more than \$7 billion.

How have Blackstone and the others created such wealth? *Private equity* is an elastic term, but the typical buyout

transaction involves scooping up an undervalued public company, taking it into private ownership, fixing it, then a few years later selling it at a profit. Private-equity firms, unlike hedge funds, are hands-on owners of the assets they acquire. In many cases they bring superior expertise, and in all cases ruthless discipline. They usually bring one other thing as well: debt. The target firm is financially restructured, with less owners' capital and more debt on its balance sheet. If the firm does well, the owners' returns, now teetering on a smaller base of capital, are much higher than they would have been without the new leverage. If the firm does badly, the debt makes the hurt much worse, and sometimes terminal.

The business has boomed. There are thousands of private-equity firms

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AP PHOTO/RICHARD DREW

worldwide. Blackstone, the biggest in terms of total assets under management, was just a four-person, one-room outfit with a balance sheet of \$400,000 in 1985, according to the firm's Web site. Today it manages, in all, nearly \$90 billion in assets. The 50 companies in which it has a stake employ 400,000 people. The other big firms—Carlyle, TPG, Bain, KKR—also carry assets valued at tens of billions of dollars. From almost nothing in the mid-1990s, the global value of private-equity buyouts rose to \$700 billion last year. That was more than twice as much as in 2005, and it accounted for about a fifth of all mergers and acquisitions worldwide. This year's figures are on track to exceed that total.

Is it all a bubble? Many market professionals think so, but only harder economic times will reveal how much these gains represent real economic value, rather than financial illusion.

Nobody disputes that in many instances private equity has delivered better management. The talent for financial engineering that private equity brings to its acquisitions is also real, and can genuinely boost corporate value. Private-equity firms are not, for the most part, raiders or asset-strippers. Many of the acquisitions are friendly, not hostile. The target companies may get an infusion of capital to embark on new ventures or to enable unprofitable lines of business to be cut back. The idea that this is all smoke and mirrors is wrong.

Recently, though, as the industry has been scoring its most startling successes, a strong stock market has made it unusually easy for the firms to sell their restructured enterprises back into public ownership at a profit. Rising stock prices have undoubtedly flattered private equity's results. Yet this cannot last: Wall Street goes down as well as up. In addition, interest rates have been low of late. More than anything else, cheap credit has fueled the private-equity boom. But in June, as Blackstone was preparing its initial public offering, the bond market shuddered, and long-term interest rates climbed to a five-year high.

A deeper and more important question about private equity is this: Supposing even some of the gains in value achieved by these leveraged buyouts are real—and that seems likely—then what is wrong with the public capital markets? Why does a firm need to be taken private to be better managed or more intelligently financed? You could see the success of private equity as an indictment of American capitalism. If Wall Street were working as it's supposed to, you might argue, private equity would have found no space to overrun in the first place.

Private equity has a genuine advantage in financing risky undertakings. Arm's-length creditors, such as banks and bond investors, typically will not supply capital to a firm about to undergo a big restructuring or to embark on a chancy new venture, unless they are well compensated for the extra risk. Because

in the wake of Enron, Tyco, and other corporate scandals. It called for more-demanding audits of public-company financial accounts, and its Section 404, regarded as especially burdensome by many CEOs, legally requires company bosses to personally vouch for the numbers. "Sarbox" is only one aspect of a regime of corporate regulation that seems, by international standards, increasingly persnickety, complex, and hazard-prone. It does not help that the United States has overlapping systems of public-company regulation. Different types of securities have different federal and state oversight agencies. State attorneys general (following the example of New York's Eliot Spitzer) have been broadening their role as corporate policemen as well. Between 1995 and 2005, securities class-action lawsuits ran up settlements on the order of \$25 billion.

Why does a firm need to be taken private to be better managed or more intelligently financed?

private-equity investors participate in the running of the company, they can see the risk more clearly and have a say in how best to control it. So, the theory goes, they are more willing to invest, and thus they improve the supply of capital to ventures that might otherwise be starved of funds. This comes at a cost—the value that private-equity managers extract for themselves—but it is worth it. The point is not that the public markets fail; it's that they cannot do everything. In principle, a mix of public and private equity is fine.

But why has the mix changed so abruptly in the past few years? At the very least, the surge in private equity raises the possibility that the public markets are not as good as they used to be at channeling capital to its best and most productive uses. And that, in fact, is exactly what many finance experts are arguing.

High on their list of factors is the Sarbanes-Oxley law, passed in 2002

Blackstone's IPO notwithstanding, New York has been losing its share of the global IPO market, notably to London. In London, litigation that puts company directors at personal risk is less of a danger. Regulation is more streamlined, and is based more on the application of broad principles than on compliance with endlessly proliferating rules.

The issue is not open-and-shut. Some finance experts argue that the American approach is right. The drift of IPOs offshore may point one way, but other evidence shows that foreign companies listing in the United States gain a valuation premium, perhaps reflecting the extra investor confidence that tighter regulation brings. Maybe Sarbox, added to the rest, went too far. Or maybe the balance was wrong before and now is right. In either case, it is plausible to argue that an unintended consequence of "No more Enrons" was Stephen Schwarzman's net worth. ■

Clive Crook is an Atlantic senior editor.

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Media

JOURNALISM AND JOURNALISTS

July 1874

BY F. B. SANBORN

Approximately a decade after the Civil War, the journalist and author F. B. Sanborn defended newspaper writing against its detractors and expressed high hopes for journalism's future.

Journalism in America is something, has been nothing, and aspires to be everything. There are no limits, in the ambitions of enterprising editors, to the future power of the American newspaper. It is not only to make and unmake presidents and parties, institutions and reputations; but it must regulate the minutest details of our daily lives, and be school-master, preacher, lawgiver, judge, jury, executioner, and policeman in one grand combination ...

It is common to laugh at newspaper English, and the knowledge that is derived only from the newspapers. But ... there is no better English than we find in the newspaper ... Writers are apt to think they must distinguish themselves by an uncommon style: hence elaborate stiffness and quaint brilliance ... It is because a journalist thinks more of his matter than of his manner, and seeks to make himself understood rather than admired, that he writes so well ... The careful reader of a few good newspapers can learn more in a year than most scholars do in their great libraries.

Fol. 34, No. 201, pp. 55-66

NEWSPAPER MORALS

March 1914

BY HENRY L. MENCKEN

During an era characterized by muckraking and sensationalism, the social critic H. L. Mencken decried the tendency of popular newspapers to appeal to the unsophisticated instincts of the masses.

Any reflective newspaper man ... knows very well that a definite limit is set, not only upon the people's capacity for grasping intellectual concepts, but also upon their capacity for grasping moral concepts ...

In brief, he knows that it is hard for the plain people to *think* about a thing, but easy for them to *feel* ...

One of the principal marks of an educated man ... is the fact that he does *not* take his opinions from newspapers—not, at any rate, from the militant, crusading newspapers. On the contrary, his attitude toward them is almost always one of frank cynicism, with indifference as its mildest form and contempt as its commonest. He knows that they are constantly falling into false reasoning about the things within his personal knowledge,—that is, with the narrow circle of his special education,—and so he assumes that they make the same, or even worse errors about other things, whether intellectual or moral. This assumption, it may be said at once, is quite justified by the facts.

Fol. 113, No. 3, pp. 289-297

NEWSPAPER MORALS: A REPLY

June 1914

BY RALPH PULITZER

Three months later, Ralph Pulitzer, who had recently inherited the editorship of the New York World from his father, struck back against Mencken, dismissing his criticisms as unfair and classist.

Mr. Mencken ... 'assume[s] here, as an axiom too obvious to be argued, that the chief appeal of a newspaper ... is not at all to the educated and reflective minority of citizens, but to the ignorant and unreflective majority.' On the contrary, it is very far from being 'too obvious to be argued.' A great many persons of guaranteed education are sadly destitute of any reflectiveness whatsoever, while an appalling number of 'the ignorant' have the effrontery to be able to reflect very efficiently ...

Granted that in the heat of battle [the press] fails to handle the cold conceptions of austere philosophers with proper scientific etiquette. Granted that it makes blunders in technical statements ... Granted that it mixes its science and its sentiment in a manner to shock the gentlemen of disembodied intellects. Granted that the press has many more such intellectual peccadilloes on its conscience.

But if the press does these things honestly, it does them morally, and does not need to excuse them.

Fol. 113, No. 6, pp. 773-778

THE JOB OF THE WASHINGTON CORRESPONDENT

January 1960

BY WALTER LIPPMANN

In 1960, the columnist and philosopher Walter Lippmann emphasized the magnitude of the task with which those reporting from Washington are entrusted.

In a democracy like ours, it is an awful responsibility to undertake the processing of the raw news so as to make it intelligible and to reveal its significance. It is such a great responsibility, it lends itself so easily to all manner of shenanigans that, when I can bear to think about it, I console myself with the thought that we are only the first generation of newspapermen who have been assigned the job of informing a mass audience about a world that is in a period of such ... unprecedented change ...

Last summer, while walking in the woods ... I found myself daydreaming about how I would ... justify the business of being opinionated and of airing opinions regularly several times a week.

"Is it not absurd," I heard the critic saying, "that anyone should think he knows enough to write so much about so many things? You write about foreign policy. Do you see the cables which pour into the State Department every day from all parts of the world? Do you attend the staff meetings? ..."

In my daydream ... I turn upon him and with suitable eloquence declaim an apology for the existence of the Washington correspondent.

"If the country is to be governed with the consent of the governed, then the governed must arrive at opinions about what their governors want them to consent to. How do they do this?

"They do it by hearing on the radio and reading in the newspapers what the corps of correspondents tell them is going on in Washington, and in the country at large, and in the world. Here, we

correspondents perform an essential service ... We make it our business to find out what is going on under the surface and beyond the horizon, to infer, to deduce, to imagine, and to guess what is going on inside, what this meant yesterday, and what it could mean tomorrow.

"In this we do what every sovereign citizen is supposed to do but has not the time or the interest to do for himself. This is our job. It is no mean calling. We have a right to be proud of it and to be glad that it is our work."

Vol. 205, No. 1, pp. 47-49

THE POWER AND THE PROFITS

January 1976

BY DAVID HALBERSTAM

In a comprehensive article on changes in the media, the Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter David Halberstam commented on the outsize power—and consequent drawbacks—of television as a journalistic medium.

Journalism at its best is a highly personal art, and radio encouraged individualism. The technology of radio was not complicated or expensive; if a correspondent had a story, he simply went on the air ...

Television required so much contrivance. It was a team art, involving producers, cameramen, sound men, levels and levels of technicians, all of whom might distort the effect of the individual journalist ...

Politically, television was simply too powerful a force, too fast, too immediate, with too large an audience, for the kind of easy journalistic freedom that radio and print reporters had enjoyed ... It was as if an unwritten law of American journalism had evolved, stating that the greater the institutional platform, and the more power it has to influence public opinion, the more carefully it must be used and the less it must wander from the accepted norms of American society. It is better to

be a little wrong and a little late on a major sensitive story than it is to be too right too far ahead of the rest of the country.

Vol. 237, No. 1, pp. 33-71

WHY AMERICANS HATE THE MEDIA

February 1996

BY JAMES FALLOWS

In a media landscape increasingly characterized by combative political talk shows and shallow reportage, The Atlantic's Washington editor, James Fallows, lamented that many journalists were not taking their profession seriously:

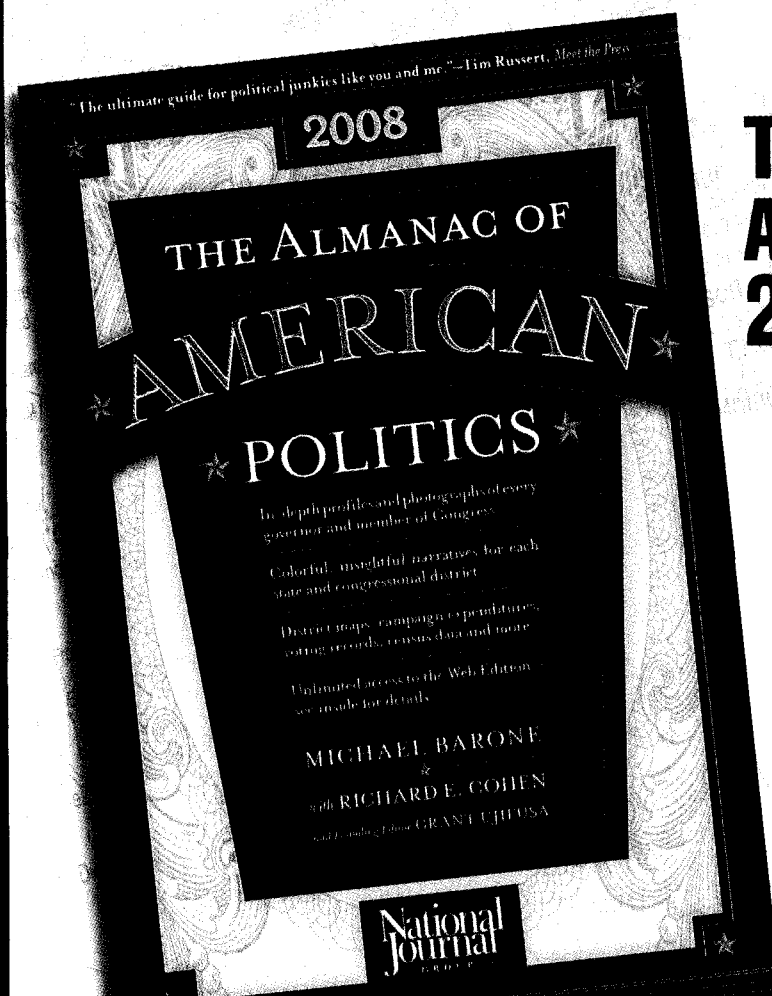
When ordinary citizens have a chance to pose questions to political leaders, they rarely ask about the game of politics. They want to know how the reality of politics will affect them—through taxes, programs, scholarship funds, wars. Journalists ... ask questions that only their fellow political professionals care about. And they often do so—as at the typical White House news conference—with a discourtesy and rancor that represent the public's views much less than they reflect the modern journalist's belief that being independent boils down to acting hostile ...

They are interested mainly in pure politics and can be coerced into examining the substance of an issue only as a last resort. The subtle but sure result is a stream of daily messages that the real meaning of public life is the struggle of Bob Dole against Newt Gingrich against Bill Clinton, rather than our collective efforts to solve collective problems ...

Even if practiced perfectly, journalism will leave some resentment and bruised feelings in its wake. The justification that journalists can offer for the harm they inevitably inflict is to show, through their actions, their understanding that what they do matters and that it should be done with care.

Vol. 277, No. 2, pp. 45-64

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Karl Rove had the plan, the power, and
the historic chance to remake American politics.
What went wrong?

BY JOSHUA GREEN

The ROVE Presidency

With more than a year left in the fading Bush presidency, Karl Rove's worst days in the White House may still lie ahead of him. I met Rove on one of his best days, a week after Bush's reelection. The occasion was a reporters' lunch hosted by *The Christian Science Monitor* at the St. Regis Hotel in Washington, a customary stop for the winning and losing campaign teams to offer battle assessments and answer questions. ¶ Kerry's team had glumly passed through a few days earlier. Afterward his chief strategist, Bob Shrum, boarded a plane and left the country. Rove had endured a »

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heart-stopping Election Day (early exit polls indicated a Kerry landslide) but had prevailed, and plainly wasn't hurrying off anywhere. "The Architect," as Bush had just dubbed him, had spent the week collecting praise and had now arrived—vindicated, secure of his place in history—to hold court before the political press corps.

When Rove entered the room, everyone stood up to congratulate him and shake his hand. Washington journalism has become a kind of Cult of the Consultant, so the energy in the room was a lot like it might have been if Mickey Mantle had come striding into the clubhouse after knocking in the game-winning run in the World Series. Rove was pumped.

Before taking questions, he removed a folded piece of paper from his pocket and rattled off a series of numbers that made clear how he wanted the election to be seen: not as a squeaker but a rout. "This was an extraordinary election," Rove said. "[Bush won] 59.7 million votes, and we still have about 250,000 ballots to count. Think about that—*nearly 60 million votes!* The previous largest number was Ronald Reagan in 1984, sweeping the country with 49 states. We won 81 percent of all the counties in America. We gained a percentage of the vote in 87 percent of the counties in America. In Florida, we received nearly a million votes more in this election than in the last one." Rove was officially there to talk about the campaign, but it was clear he had something much bigger in mind. So no one missed his point, he invoked Franklin Roosevelt's supremacy in the 1930s and suggested that something similar was at hand: "We've laid out an agenda, we've laid out a vision, and now people want to see results."

THE EARLY BIRDS

At dawn they start again, the early birds,
as if they'd left some bitter things unsaid
the day before. The sharp notes rise in thirds.
I wake up knowing that I'll soon be dead,

and that's no worse than justice, as is just.
The kindest words are almost never meant.
Most fond endearments fill us with disgust.
To lie is sometimes all too eloquent;

but, as I stumble toward that unknown date,
even the lies may be inadequate.

—WILLIAM LOGAN

William Logan's most recent book of essays and reviews, *The Undiscovered Country*, received the 2005 National Book Critics Circle Award in Criticism. His most recent book of poetry is *The Whispering Gallery* (2005).

One of the goals of any ambitious president is to create a governing coalition just as Roosevelt did, one that long outlasts your presidency. It's the biggest thing you can aim for, and only a few presidents have achieved it. As the person with the long-term vision in the Bush administration, and with no lack of ambition either, Rove had thought long and hard about achieving this goal before ever arriving in the White House, and he has pursued it more aggressively than anyone else.

Rove has always cast himself not merely as a campaign manager but as someone with a mind for policy and for history's deeper currents—as someone, in other words, with the wherewithal not just to exploit the political landscape but to reshape it. At the *Christian Science Monitor* lunch, he appeared poised to do just that. It was already clear that Social Security privatization, a longtime Rove enthusiasm, was the first thing Bush would pursue in his second term. When things are going well for Rove, he adopts a towel-snapping jocularity. He looked supremely sure of his prospects for success.

But within a year the administration was crumbling. Social Security had gone nowhere. Hurricane Katrina, the worsening war in Iraq, and the disastrous nomination of Harriet Miers to the Supreme Court shattered the illusion of stern competence that had helped reelect Bush. What surprised everybody was how suddenly it happened; for a while, many devotees of the Cult of Rove seemed not to accept that it had. As recently as last fall, serious journalists were churning out soaring encomiums to Rove and his methods with titles like *One Party Country* and *The Way to Win*. In retrospect, everyone should have been focusing less on how those methods were used to win elections and more on why they couldn't deliver once the elections were over.

The story of why an ambitious Republican president working with a Republican Congress failed to achieve most of what he set out to do finds Rove at center stage. A big paradox of Bush's presidency is that Rove, who had maybe the best purely political mind in a generation and almost limitless opportunities to apply it from the very outset, managed to steer the administration toward disaster.

Years from now, when the major figures in the Bush administration publish their memoirs, historians may have a clearer idea of what went wrong than we do today. As an exercise in not waiting that long, I spent several months reading the early memoirs and talking to people inside and outside the administration (granting anonymity as necessary), in Congress, and in lobbying and political consulting firms that dealt directly with Rove in the White House. (Rove declined requests for an interview.) The idea was to look at the Bush years and make a first pass at explaining the consequential figure in the vortex—to answer the question, How should history understand Karl Rove, and with him, this administration?

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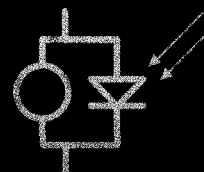
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Fifty years ago, political scientists developed what is known as realignment theory—the idea that a handful of elections in the nation’s history mattered more than the others because they created “sharp and durable” changes in the polity that lasted for decades. Roosevelt’s election in 1932, which brought on the New Deal and three decades of Democratic dominance in Washington, is often held up as the classic example. Modern American historians generally see five elections as realigning: 1800, when Thomas Jefferson’s victory all but finished off the Federalist Party and reoriented power from the North to the agrarian South; 1828, when Andrew Jackson’s victory gave rise to the modern two-party system and two decades of Jacksonian influence; 1860, when Abraham Lincoln’s election marked the ascendance of the Republican Party and of the secessionist impulse that led to the Civil War; 1896, when the effects of industrialization affirmed an increasingly urban political order that brought William McKinley to power; and Roosevelt’s election in 1932, during the Great Depression.

Academics debate many aspects of this theory, such as whether realignment comes in regular cycles, and whether it is driven by voter intensity or disillusionment. But historians have shown that two major preconditions typically must be in place for realignment to occur. First, party loyalty must be sufficiently weak to allow for a major shift—the electorate, as the political scientist Paul Allen Beck has put it, must be “ripe for realignment.” The other condition is that the nation must undergo some sort of triggering event, often what Beck calls a “societal trauma”—the ravaging depressions of the 1890s and 1930s, for instance, or the North-South conflict of the 1850s and ’60s that ended in civil war. It’s important to have both. Depressions and wars throughout American history have had no realigning consequence because the electorate wasn’t primed for one, just as periods of electoral unrest have passed without a realignment for lack of a catalyzing event.

Before he ever came to the White House, Rove fervently believed that the country was on the verge of another great shift. His faith derived from his reading of the presidency of a man most historians regard as a mediocrity. Anyone on the campaign trail in 2000 probably heard him cite the pivotal importance of William McKinley’s election in 1896. Rove thought there were important similarities.

“Everything you know about William McKinley and Mark Hanna—McKinley’s Rove—“is wrong,” he told Nicholas Lemann of *The New Yorker* in early 2000. “The country was in a period of change. McKinley’s the guy who figured it out. Politics were changing. The economy was changing. We’re at the same point now: weak allegiances to parties, a rising new economy.” Rove was suggesting that the electorate in 2000, as in 1896, was ripe

for realignment, and implying, somewhat immodestly, that he was the guy who had figured it out. What was missing was an obvious trigger. With the economy soaring (the stock-market collapse in the spring of 2000 was still months away) and the nation at peace, there was no reason to expect that a realignment was about to happen.

Instead, Rove’s idea was to use the levers of government to create an effect that ordinarily occurs only in the most tumultuous periods in American history. He believed he could force a realignment himself through a series of far-reaching policies. Rove’s plan had five major components: establish education standards, pass a “faith-based initiative” directing government funds to religious organizations, partially privatize Social Security, offer private health-savings accounts as an alternative to Medicare, and reform immigration laws to appeal to the growing Hispanic population. Each of these, if enacted, would weaken the Democratic Party by drawing some of its core supporters into the Republican column. His plan would lead, he believed, to a period of Republican dominance like the one that followed McKinley’s election.

Rove’s vision had a certain abstract conceptual logic to it, much like the administration’s plan to spread democracy by force in the Middle East. If you could invade and pacify Iraq and Afghanistan, the thinking went, democracy would spread across the region. Likewise, if you could recast major government programs to make them more susceptible to market forces, broader support for the Republican Party would ensue. But in both cases the visionaries ignored the enormous difficulty of carrying off such seismic changes.

The Middle East failure is all too well-known—the vaulting ambition coupled with the utter inability of top administration figures to bring about their grand idea. What is less appreciated is how Rove set out to do something every bit as audacious with domestic policy. Earlier political realignments resulted from historical accidents or anomalies, conditions that were recognized and exploited after the fact by talented politicians. Nobody ever planned one. Rove didn’t wait for history to happen to him—he tried to create it on his own. “It’s hard to think of any analogue in American history,” says David Mayhew, a Yale political scientist who has written a book on electoral realignments, “to what Karl Rove was trying to do.”

Rove’s style as a campaign consultant was to plot out well in advance of a race exactly what he would do and to stick with it no matter what. But he arrived in the White House carrying ambitions at striking variance with those of a president whose stated aims were modest and who had lost the popular vote. The prevailing view of Bush at the time seems impossibly remote today. But the notion that he wanted nothing more than “to do

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a few things, and do them well," as he claimed, seemed sensible enough. Nothing suggested that radical change was possible, much less likely, and the narrow margins in Congress meant that any controversial measure would require nearly flawless execution to prevail.

And yet at first it appeared that Bush might be capable of achieving big things. His first initiative, the No Child Left Behind Act, unfolded as a model of how to operate in a narrowly divided environment. Bush had made education a central theme of his campaign, an unlikely choice given that the issue strongly favors Democrats. Accountability standards had been one of his signature accomplishments as governor of Texas, and he made a persuasive pitch for them on the campaign trail. Rove likes to point out that people who named education as their top issue voted for the Democrat over the Republican 76–16 percent in the 1996 presidential election, but just 52–44 in 2000. His point is that Bush moved the electorate.

As the top political adviser in the White House, Rove orchestrated the rollout of Bush's legislative agenda. In

By late summer of his first year, the early burst of achievement had slowed and Bush's approval ratings were beginning to sag. Ronald Brownstein of *The Los Angeles Times* dubbed him the "A4 president," unable even to make the front page of the newspaper. He did not seem the likely leader of a realignment.

That September 11 was both a turning point for the Bush administration and an event that would change the course of American history was immediately clear. It was also clear, if less widely appreciated, that the attacks were the type of event that can instantly set off a great shifting of the geological strata of American politics. In a coincidence of epic dimensions, 9/11 provided, just when Rove needed it, the historical lever missing until then. He had been presented with exactly the sort of "societal trauma" that makes realignment possible, and with it a fresh chance to pursue his goal. Bob Woodward's trilogy on the Bush White House makes clear how neoconservatives in the administration recognized that 9/11 gave them

In retrospect, everyone should have been focusing less on how Rove's methods were used to win elections and more on why they couldn't deliver once the elections were over.

December, even before the inauguration, he put together a conference in Austin that included key Democrats who went on to support the education bills that sailed through Congress and became the first piece of Rove's realignment. At the time, everybody assumed this was how Bush would operate—"as a uniter, not a divider," his method in Texas, where he left behind a permanent-seeming Republican majority.

It's not clear why Bush abandoned the moderate style that worked with No Child Left Behind. One of the big what-ifs of his presidency is how things might have turned out had he stuck with it (education remains the one element of Rove's realignment project that was successfully enacted). What did become clear is that Rove's tendency, like Bush's, is always to choose the most ambitious option in a list and then pursue it by the most aggressive means possible—an approach that generally works better in campaigns than in governing. Instead of modest bipartisanship, the administration's preferred style of governing became something much closer to the way Rove runs campaigns: Steamroll the opposition whenever possible, and reach across the aisle only in the rare cases, like No Child Left Behind, when it is absolutely necessary. The large tax cut that Bush pursued and won on an almost party-line vote just afterward is a model of this confrontational style. Its limitations would become apparent.

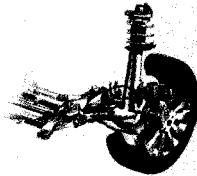
the opening they'd long desired to forcefully remake the Middle East. Rove recognized the same opening.

After 9/11, any pretense of shared sacrifice or of reaching across the aisle was abandoned. The administration could demand—and get—almost anything it wanted, easily flattening Democratic opposition, which it did with increasing frequency on issues like the PATRIOT Act and the right of Department of Homeland Security workers to unionize. The crisis atmosphere allowed the White House to ignore what normally would have been some of its most basic duties—working with Republicans in Congress (let alone Democrats) and laying the groundwork in Congress and with the American public for what it hoped to achieve. At the time, however, this didn't seem to matter.

Rove's systematic policy of sharply contrasting Republican and Democratic positions on national security was a brilliant campaign strategy and the critical mechanism of Republican victory in the 2002 midterms. But he could not foresee how this mode of operating would ultimately work at cross-purposes with his larger goal. "What Bush went out and did in 2002," a former administration official told me, "clearly at Karl's behest, with an eye toward the permanent Republican majority, was very aggressively attack those Democrats who voted with him and were for him. There's no question that the president helped pick up seats. But all of that goodwill was squandered."

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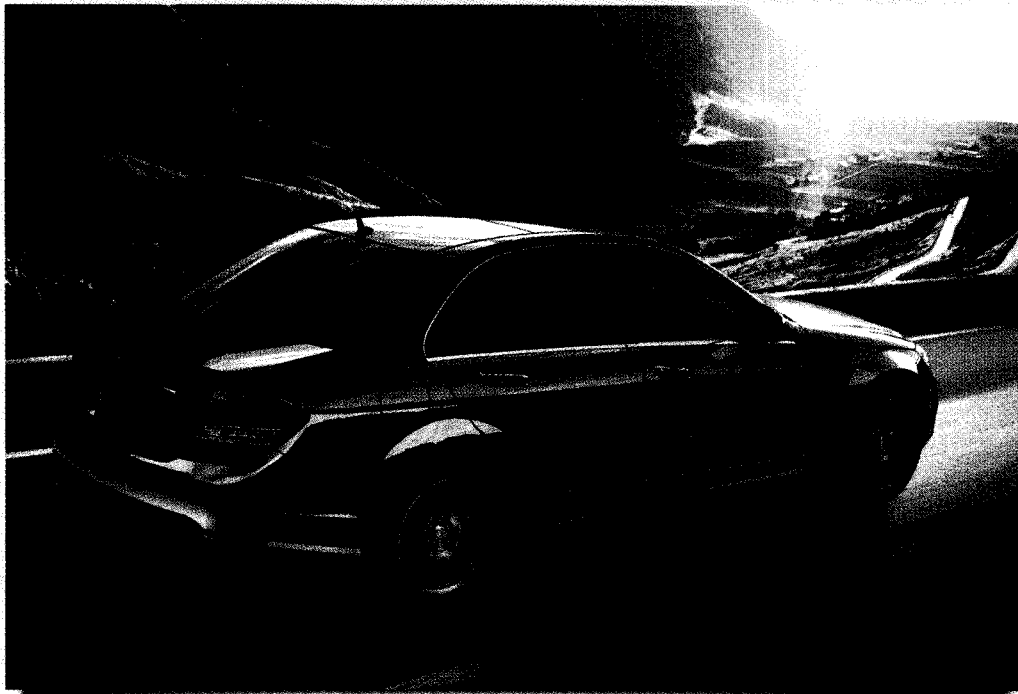
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From the outset, Rove's style of pursuing realignment—through division—was in stark contrast to the way it had happened the last time. In *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal*, the historian William E. Leuchtenburg notes that Roosevelt mentioned the Democratic Party by name only three times in his entire 1936 reelection campaign. Throughout his presidency, Roosevelt had large Democratic majorities in Congress but operated in a nonpartisan fashion, as though he didn't. Bush, with razor-thin majorities—and for a time, a divided Congress—operated as though his margins were insurmountable, and sowed interparty divisions as an electoral strategy.

Rove never graduated from college. He dropped out of the University of Utah and campaigned for the chairmanship of the College Republicans, a national student organization whose leaders often go on to important positions in the party. He won, placing himself on a fast track to a career in politics. But he was and remains an autodidact, and a large part of his self-image depends on showing that his command of history and politics is an order of magnitude greater than other people's. Rove has a need to outdo everybody else that seems to inform his sometimes contrarian views of history. It's not enough for him to have read everything; he needs to have read everything and arrived at insights that others missed.

This aspect of Rove was on fuller-than-usual display during a speech he gave at the University of Utah, titled "What Makes a Great President," just after the Republicans swept the 2002 elections. The incumbent presidential party typically loses seats in the off-year election, so winning was a big deal to Rove, who actively involved himself in many of the campaigns. Overcoming historical precedent seemed to feed his oracular sense of himself, and during his speech and the question-and-answer period that followed he revealed a lot about how he thinks and where he imagined his party was going.

In his speech, he described a visit to the White House by the revisionist historian Forrest McDonald, who spoke about presidential greatness. Rove expressed delight at discovering a fellow McKinley enthusiast, and said that McDonald had explained in his talk, "Nobody knows McKinley is great, because history demanded little of him. He modernized the presidency, he modernized the Treasury to deal with the modern economy, he changed dramatically the policies of his party by creating a durable governing coalition for 40 years"—this last part clearly excited Rove—"and he attempted deliberately to break with the Gilded Age politics. He was inclusive, and he was the first Republican candidate for president to be endorsed by a leader in the Catholic hierarchy. The Protestant Anglo-Saxon Republicans were scandalized by his 1896 campaign, in which he paraded Portuguese fishermen and Slovak coal miners and Serbian iron workers

to Canton, Ohio, to meet him. He just absolutely scandalized the country."

In this way of telling it, McKinley alone understood what everybody else was missing: A political realignment was under way, and by harnessing it, though it might "scandalize" conventional thinking, McKinley would not only carry the presidency but also bring about an unprecedented period of dominance for his party. The subtext seemed to be that Rove, too, recognized something everybody else had missed—the chance for a Republican realignment—just as he recognized the overlooked genius of William McKinley. He joked to the audience, "This tripled the size of the McKinley caucus in Washington—it was Bob Novak, me, and now Forrest McDonald."

After the speech a member of the audience asked a question that took as its premise the notion that America was evenly divided between Republicans and Democrats. Rove insisted this was not the case, pouring forth a barrage of numbers from the recent midterm elections that seemed to lay waste to the notion. "Something is going on out there," Rove insisted. "Something else more fundamental ... But we will only know it retrospectively. In two years or four years or six years, [we may] look back and say the dam began to break in 2002."

Like his hero McKinley, he alone was the true visionary. Everyone else looked at the political landscape and saw a nation at rough parity. Rove looked at the same thing and saw an emerging Republican majority.

From Rove's vantage point after the 2002 elections, everything seemed to be on track. He had a clear strategy for achieving realignment and the historical conditions necessary to enact it. His already considerable influence within the administration was growing with the Republican Party's rising fortunes, which were credited to his strategy of aggressive divisiveness on the issues of war and terrorism. But what Rove took to be the catalyst for realignment turned out to be the catalyst for his fall.

September 11 temporarily displaced much of what was going on in Washington at the time. The ease with which Republicans were able to operate in the aftermath of the attacks was misleading, and it imbued Rove, in particular, with false confidence that what he was doing would continue to work. In reality, it masked problems—bad relationships with Congress, a lack of support for Bush's broader agenda—that either went unseen or were consciously ignored. Hubris and a selective understanding of history led Rove into a series of errors and misjudgments that compounded to devastating effect.

He never appreciated that his success would ultimately depend on the sustained cooperation of congressional Republicans, and he developed a dysfunctional relationship with many of them. This wasn't clear at first. Several of the administration's early moves looked particularly

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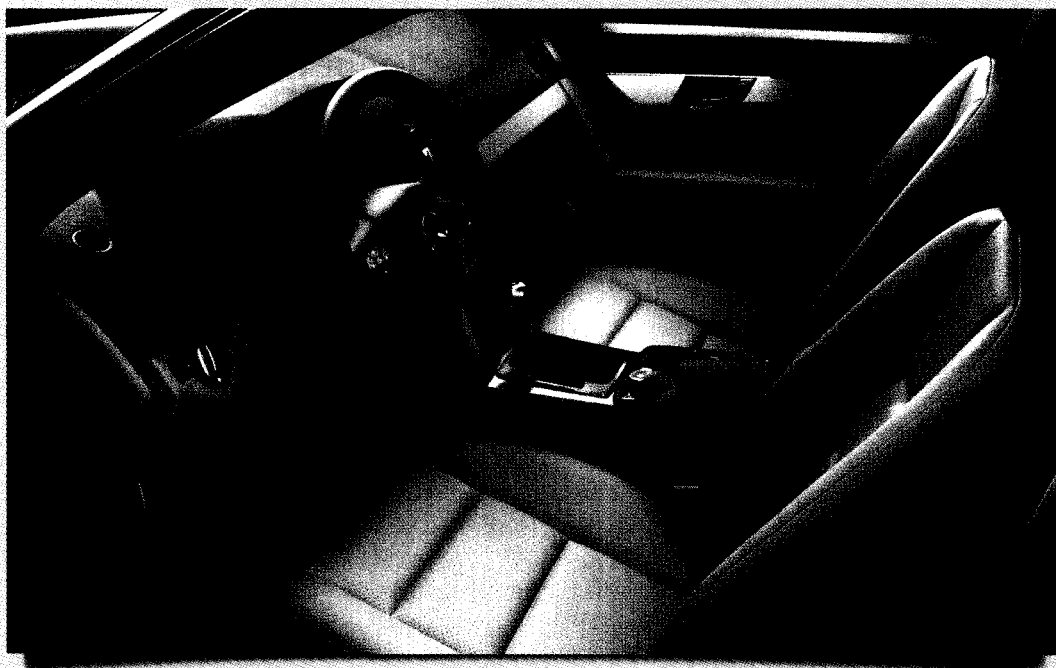


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shrewd, one of them being to place the White House congressional liaisons in the office suite of the majority whip, Tom DeLay of Texas. At the time, DeLay was officially third in the Republican House leadership hierarchy, but as everyone knew, he was the capo of House Republicans and the man to see if you wanted to get something done.

Things never clicked. Republicans on the Hill say that Rove and DeLay, both formidable men who had known each other in Texas, had a less-than-amiable relationship. When I asked DeLay about their history, he let out a malevolent chuckle and told me that his very first race had pitted him against one of Rove's candidates. "They were nasty to me," DeLay recalled. "I had some payroll tax liens against me, as most small businessmen do, and I was driving a red Eldorado at the time. The taxes were paid, but they were running radio ads saying I was a deadbeat who didn't pay my taxes." DeLay still remembered the ad: "He wants to drive his red Cadillac to Washington on the backs of the taxpayers."

DeLay made a point of saying he didn't hold a grudge. ("That wouldn't be Christian of me.") But he did allow that Rove had been extremely aggressive in trying to impose his ideas on Congress. "Karl and I are sort of the same personality," he explained, "so we end up screaming at each other. But in the end you walk out of the room with an agenda." DeLay insists he didn't mind Rove's screaming, but if that's true, he belongs to a truly Christian group.

Rove's behavior toward Congress stood out. "Every once in a while Rove would come to leadership meetings, and he definitely considered himself at least an equal with the leaders in the room," a Republican aide told me. "But you have to understand that Congress is a place where a certain decorum is expected. Even in private, staff is still staff. Rove would come and chime in as if he were equal to the speaker. Cheney sometimes came, too, and was far more deferential than Rove—and he was the vice president." Other aides say Rove was notorious for interrupting congressional leaders and calling them by their first name.

Dick Armey, the House Republican majority leader when Bush took office (and no more a shrinking violet than DeLay), told me a story that captures the exquisite pettiness of most members of Congress and the arrogance that made Bush and Rove so inept at handling them. "For all the years he was president," Armey told me, "Bill Clinton and I had

a little thing we'd do where every time I went to the White House, I would take the little name tag they give you and pass it to the president, who, without saying a word, would sign and date it. Bill Clinton and I didn't like each other. He said I was his least-favorite member of Congress. But he knew that when I left his office, the first schoolkid I came across would be given that card, and some kid who had come to Washington with his mama would go home with the president's autograph. I think Clinton thought it was a nice thing to do for some kid, and he was happy to do it." Armey said that when he went to his first meeting in the White House with President Bush, he explained the tradition with Clinton and asked the president if he would care to continue it. "Bush refused to sign the card. Rove, who was sitting across the table, said, 'It would probably wind up on eBay,'" Armey continued. "Do I give a damn? No. But can you imagine refusing a simple request like that with an insult? It's stupid. From the point of view of your own self-interest, it's stupid. I was from Texas, and I was the majority leader. If my expectations of civility and collegiality were disappointed, what do you think it was like for the rest of the congressmen they dealt with? The Bush White House was tone-deaf to the normal courtesies of the office."

Winning the 2002 elections earned Rove further distinction as an electoral strategist. But it didn't change the basic dynamic between the White House and Congress, and Rove drew exactly the wrong lesson from the experience, bringing the steamroller approach from the campaign trail into his work in government. Emboldened by triumph, he grew more imperious, worsening his relations with the Hill. With both houses now in Republican hands, he pressed immigration reform and Social Security privatization. A congressional aide described a Republican leadership retreat after the midterms where Rove whipped out a chart and a sheaf of poll numbers and insisted to Republican leaders that they pursue a Social Security overhaul at once. Making wholesale changes to a beloved entitlement program in the run-up to a presidential election would have been a difficult sell under the best of circumstances. Lacking goodwill in Congress and having laid no groundwork for such an undertaking, Rove didn't get a serious hearing on the issue—or on immigration, either.

A revealing pattern of behavior emerged from my interviews. Rove plainly viewed his standing as equal to or exceeding that of the party's leaders in Congress and demanded what he deemed his due. Yet he was also apparently annoyed at what came with his White House eminence, complaining to colleagues when members of Congress called him to consult about routine matters he thought were beneath his standing—something that couldn't have endeared him to the legislature.

When Bush revived immigration reform this past spring and let it be known that Rove would not take part in the negotiations, the president seemed to have belatedly

XYZ

The cross the fork the zigzag—a few straight lines
For pain, quandary and evasion, the last of signs.

—ROBERT PINSKY

Robert Pinsky's new collection of poems, *Gulf Music*, will be published this fall. He served three terms as the United States poet laureate and currently teaches at Boston University.

grasped a basic truth about congressional relations that Armev summed up for me like this: "You can't call her ugly all year and expect her to go to the prom with you."

Another important misjudgment by Bush, prodded by Rove, was giving Rove too much power within the administration. This was partly a function of Rove's desire to control policy as well as politics. His prize for winning the reelection campaign was a formal role and the title of deputy chief of staff for policy. But his power also grew because the senior policy staff in the White House was inept.

In an early scene in Ron Suskind's book *The Price of Loyalty*, Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill, not yet alive to the futility of his endeavor, warns Dick Cheney that the White House policy process is so ineffectual that it is tantamount to "kids rolling around on the lawn." Had O'Neill lasted longer than he did (he resigned in 2002), he might have lowered his assessment. Before she left the White House in humiliation after conservatives blocked her nomination to the Supreme Court, White House

realized at the time. It is commonly assumed (as I assumed) that Rove exercised a major influence on White House policy before he had the title, all the time that he had it, and even after it was taken away from him in the staff shake-up last year that saw Josh Bolten succeed Andrew Card as chief of staff.

Insiders don't disagree, but say that Rove's becoming deputy chief of staff for policy was still an important development. For the purposes of comparison, a former Bush official cited the productiveness of the first two years of Bush's presidency, the period that generated not just No Child Left Behind but three tax cuts and the Medicare prescription-drug benefit. At the time, Bolten was deputy chief of staff for policy, and relations with Congress had not yet soured. "Josh was not an equal of Karl's with regard to access to the president or stature," says the official. "But he was a strong enough intellect and a strong enough presence that he was able to create a deliberative process that led to a better outcome." When Bolten left to run the Office of Management and Budget, in 2003, the balance shifted in Rove's favor, and then shifted further after the

Rove was and remains an autodidact, and a large part of his self-image depends on showing that his command of history and politics is an order of magnitude greater than other people's.

Counsel Harriet Miers had also served as deputy chief of staff for policy. The president's Domestic Policy Council was run by Claude Allen, until he, too, resigned, after he was caught shoplifting at Target.

The weakness of the White House policy staff demanded Rove's constant involvement. For all his shortcomings, he had clear ideas about where the administration should go, and the ability to maneuver. "Where the bureaucracy was failing and broken, Karl got stuff done," says a White House colleague. "Harriet was no more capable of producing policy out of the policy office she directed than you or I are capable of jumping off the roof of a building and flying to Minneapolis."

As a result, Rove not only ran the reelection campaign, he plotted much of Bush's second-term agenda, using the opportunity to push long-standing pet issues—health-savings accounts, Social Security privatization—that promised to weaken support for Democrats, by dismantling Medicare and Social Security. But this also meant committing the president to sweeping domestic changes that had no public favor and had not been a focus of the 2004 campaign, which had centered almost exclusively on the war.

Bush's reelection and Rove's assumption of a formal policy role had a bigger effect than most of Washington

reelection. "Formalizing [Rove's policy role] was the final choke-off of any internal debate or deliberative process," says the official. "There was no offset to Karl."

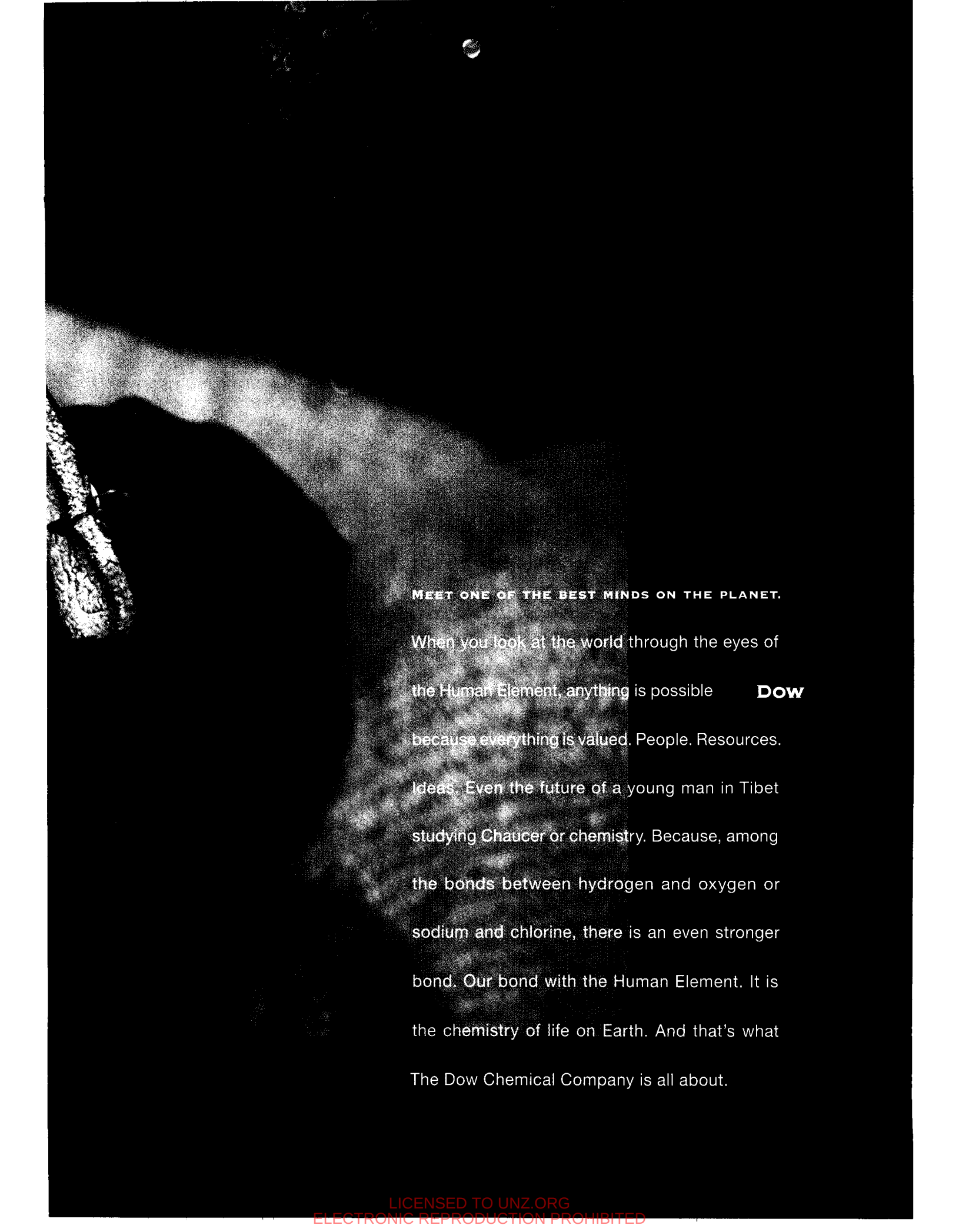
Rove's greatest shortcoming was not in conceptualizing policies but in failing to understand the process of getting them implemented, a weakness he never seems to have recognized in himself. It's startling that someone who gave so much thought to redirecting the powers of government evinced so little interest in understanding how it operates. Perhaps because he had never worked in government—or maybe because his standing rested upon his relationship with a single superior—he was often ineffective at bringing into being anything that required more than a presidential signature.

As the September 11 mind-set began to lose its power over Washington, Rove still faced the task of getting the more difficult parts of his realignment schema through Congress. But his lack of fluency in the art of moving policy and his tendency to see the world through the divisive lens of a political campaign were great handicaps. There was an important difference between the administration's first-term achievements and the entitlement overhauls (Social Security and Medicare) and volatile cultural issues (immigration) that Rove wanted to push



HUMAN

7/09



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through next. Cutting taxes and furnishing new benefits may generate some controversy in Washington, but few lawmakers who support them face serious political risk. (Tax cuts get Republicans elected!) So it's possible, with will and numbers alone, to pass them with the barest of majorities. Rove's mistake was to believe that this would work with everything.

Entitlement reform is a different animal. More important than reaching a majority is offering political cover to those willing to accept the risk of tampering with cherished programs, and the way to do this is by enlisting the other side. So the fact that Republicans controlled the White House and both houses of Congress after 2002—to Rove, a clinching argument for confrontation—actually *lessened* the likelihood of entitlement reform. Congressional Republicans didn't support Rove's plan in 2003 to tackle Social Security or immigration reform because they

Security benefits for the first time (which pleased Democrats). Unlike in 1981, Republicans in Congress weren't left exposed. Democrats couldn't attack them for raising the retirement age, because Tip O'Neill had signed on. Republicans couldn't complain about higher taxes, because Democrats had supported Ronald Reagan's plan.

At the *Christian Science Monitor* lunch just after the reelection, Rove, then at the apogee of his power, had no time for nostrums like bipartisanship or negotiation. Armed with his policy title and the aura of political genius, he pressed for the Social Security changes so far denied him. In many ways, this decision was the fulcrum of the Bush presidency. Had Bush decided not to pursue Social Security or had he somehow managed to pursue it in a way that included Democrats, his presidency might still have ended up in failure, because of Iraq. But the dramatic collapse of Rove's Social Security push foreclosed any

**Rove's idea was to
use the levers of government to create a realignment—
to force an effect that ordinarily occurs only
in the most tumultuous periods in American history.**

didn't *want* to pass such things on a party-line vote. History suggested they'd pay a steep price at election time.

To understand this, Rove need not have looked back any farther than the last Republican president who had attempted something on this order. Before he was president, Ronald Reagan talked about letting people opt out of the Social Security system, a precursor of the plan Rove favors. In 1981, in the full tide of victory, Reagan proposed large cuts—and the Republican Senate refused even to take them up. The mere fact that they had been put forward, however, was enough to imperil Republicans, who took significant losses in 1982.

The following year, Reagan tried again, this time cooperating with the Democratic speaker of the House, Tip O'Neill. He now understood that the only way to attain any serious change on such a sensitive issue was for both parties to hold hands and jump together. To afford each side deniability if things fell apart, the two leaders negotiated by proxy. O'Neill chose Robert Ball, a widely respected Social Security commissioner under three presidents, while Reagan picked Alan Greenspan, the future chairman of the Federal Reserve. Key senators in both parties were looped in.

As Ball and Greenspan made headway, it was really O'Neill and Reagan who were agreeing. To assure both sides political cover, the negotiations were an all-or-nothing process. The plan that was eventually settled on addressed the solvency problem by raising the retirement age (which pleased Republicans) and taxing Social

other possibility. It left Bush all but dead in the water for what looks to be the remainder of his time in office.

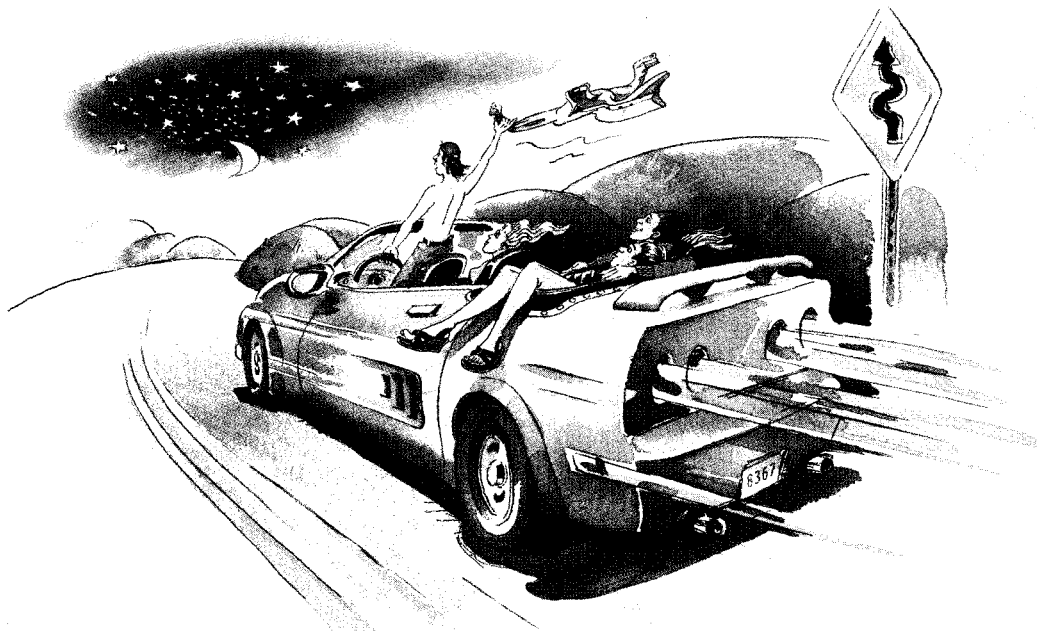
Rove pursued his plan with characteristic intensity, running it out of the White House from the top down, like a political campaign, and seeking to enlist the network of grassroots activists that had carried the Bush-Cheney ticket to a second term. Bush gave Social Security prominence in his State of the Union address, then set out on a national road show to sell the idea. But after an election fought over the war, Social Security drew little interest, and in contrast to the effect Bush achieved on education in the 2000 campaign, public support didn't budge. (It actually worsened during his tour.)

Unlike Reagan, Bush did not produce a bill that could have served as a basis for negotiation—nor did he seriously consult any Democrats with whom he might have negotiated. Instead, Rove expected a bill to emerge from Congress. The strategy of a president's outlining broad principles of what he'd like in a bill and calling on Congress to draft it has worked many times in the past. But Rove had no allies in Congress, had built no support with the American public, and had chosen to undertake the most significant entitlement reform since Reagan by having Bush barnstorm the country speaking before handpicked Republican audiences with the same partisan fervor he'd brought to the presidential campaign trail—all of which must have scared the living daylights out of the very Republicans in Congress Rove foolishly counted upon to do his bidding. The problems buried for

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years under the war and then the presidential race came roaring back, and Bush got no meaningful support from the Hill. He was left with a flawed, unpopular concept whose motive—political gain—was all too apparent.

Within months it was clear that the Social Security offensive was in deep trouble and, worse, was dragging down Bush's popularity at a time when he needed all the support he could muster for Iraq. Every week, the political brain trust in the Bush White House gathers under Rove for what is known as the "Strategy Meeting" (an ironic nod to Bush's frequent malapropisms) to plot the course ahead. What transpires is usually a closely held secret. But two former Bush officials provided an account of one meeting in the late spring of 2005, in the middle of the Social Security push, that affords a remarkable glimpse of Rove's singularity of purpose.

He opened the meeting by acknowledging that the Social Security initiative was struggling and hurting the president's approval ratings, and then announced that, despite this, they would stay the course through the summer. He admitted that the numbers would probably continue to fall. But come September, the president would hit Democrats hard on the issue of national security and pull his numbers back up again. Winning on Social Security was so important to Rove that he was evidently willing to gamble the effectiveness of Bush's second term on what most people in the White House and Congress thought were very long odds to begin with. The gamble didn't pay off. Even before Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans on the morning of August 29, what slim hope might have remained for Social Security was gone.

Hurricane Katrina clearly changed the public perception of Bush's presidency. Less examined is the role Rove played in the defining moment of the administration's response: when Air Force One flew over Louisiana and Bush gazed down from on high at the wreckage without ordering his plane down. Bush advisers Matthew Dowd and Dan Bartlett wanted the president on the ground immediately, one Bush official told me, but were overruled by Rove for reasons that are still unclear: "Karl did not want the plane to land in Louisiana." Rove's political acumen seemed to be deserting him altogether.

An important theme of future Bush administration memoirs will be the opportunity cost of leading off the second term with the misguided plan to overhaul Social Security. "The great cost of the Social Security misadventure was lost support for the war," says a former Bush official. "When you send troops to war, you have no higher responsibility as president than to keep the American people engaged and maintain popular support. But for months and months after it became obvious that Social Security was not going to happen, nobody—because of Karl's stature in the White House—could be intellectually honest in a meeting and say, 'This is not going to happen,

and we need an exit strategy to get back onto winning ground.' It was a catastrophic mistake."

It strains belief to think that someone as highly attuned as Rove to all that goes on in politics could have missed the reason for Bush's reelection: He persuaded just enough people that he was the better man to manage the war. But it's also hard to fathom how the master strategist could leave his president and his party as vulnerable as they proved to be six months into the second term. The Republican pollster Tony Fabrizio says, "People who were concerned about the war, we lost. People who were concerned about the economy, we lost. People who were concerned about health care, we lost. It goes on and on. Any of those things would have helped refocus the debate or at least put something else out there besides the war. We came out of the election and what was our agenda for the next term? Social Security. There was nothing else that we were doing. We allowed ourselves as a party to be defined by—in effect, to live and die by—the war in Iraq."

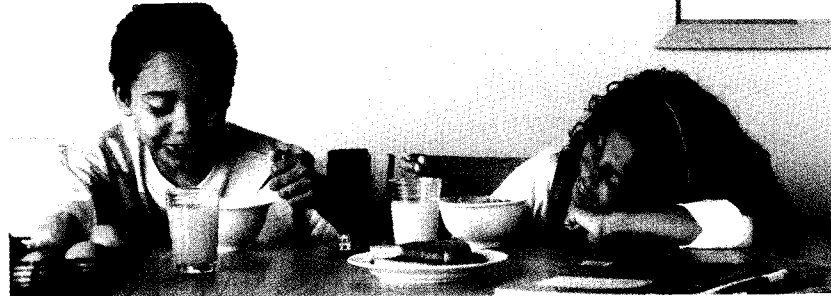
That Rove ignored a political reality so clear to everyone else can be explained only by the immutable nature of his ambition: Social Security was vital for a realignment, however unlikely its success now appeared. At the peak of his influence, the only person who could have stopped him was the one person he answered to—but the president was just as fixated on his place in history as Rove was on his own.

Moments of precise reckoning in politics are rare outside of elections. Snapshot polls don't tell you much about whole epochs. Even voter identification can be a misleading indicator. In 1976, the post-Watergate Republican Party would have appeared to be in existential peril, when in fact it was on the verge of setting the agenda for a generation. So the question of where exactly things stand right now is more complicated than it might appear.

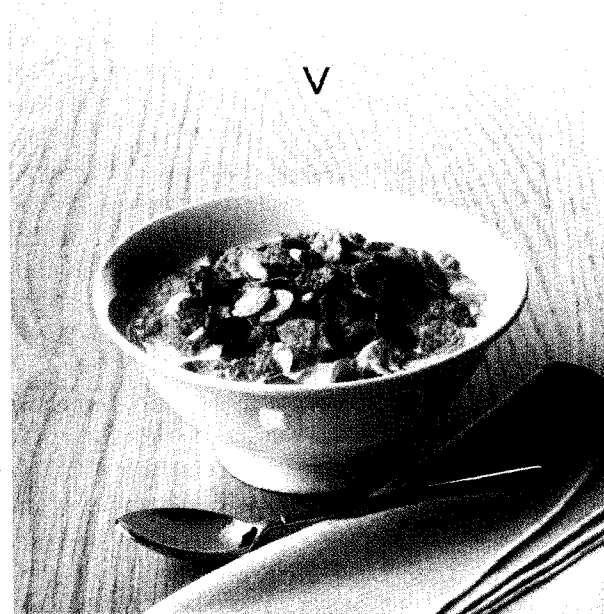
As he nears the end of his time in government, Rove has been campaigning for the notion that Bush has been more successful than he's being credited for. But the necessity of adopting history's longer perspective to make his argument says a great deal. Of the five policies in his realignment vision, Social Security and immigration failed outright; medical-savings accounts and the faith-based program wound up as small, face-saving initiatives after the original ambitions collapsed; and the lone success, No Child Left Behind, looks increasingly jeopardized as it comes up for renewal in Congress this year, a victim of Bush's unpopularity. Rove no longer talks about realignment—though the topic is now very popular with Democrats, who have a good shot at controlling both houses of Congress and the presidency after the next election. On the face of things, the Republican Party is in trouble. In a representative example, voters in a recent NBC-*Wall*



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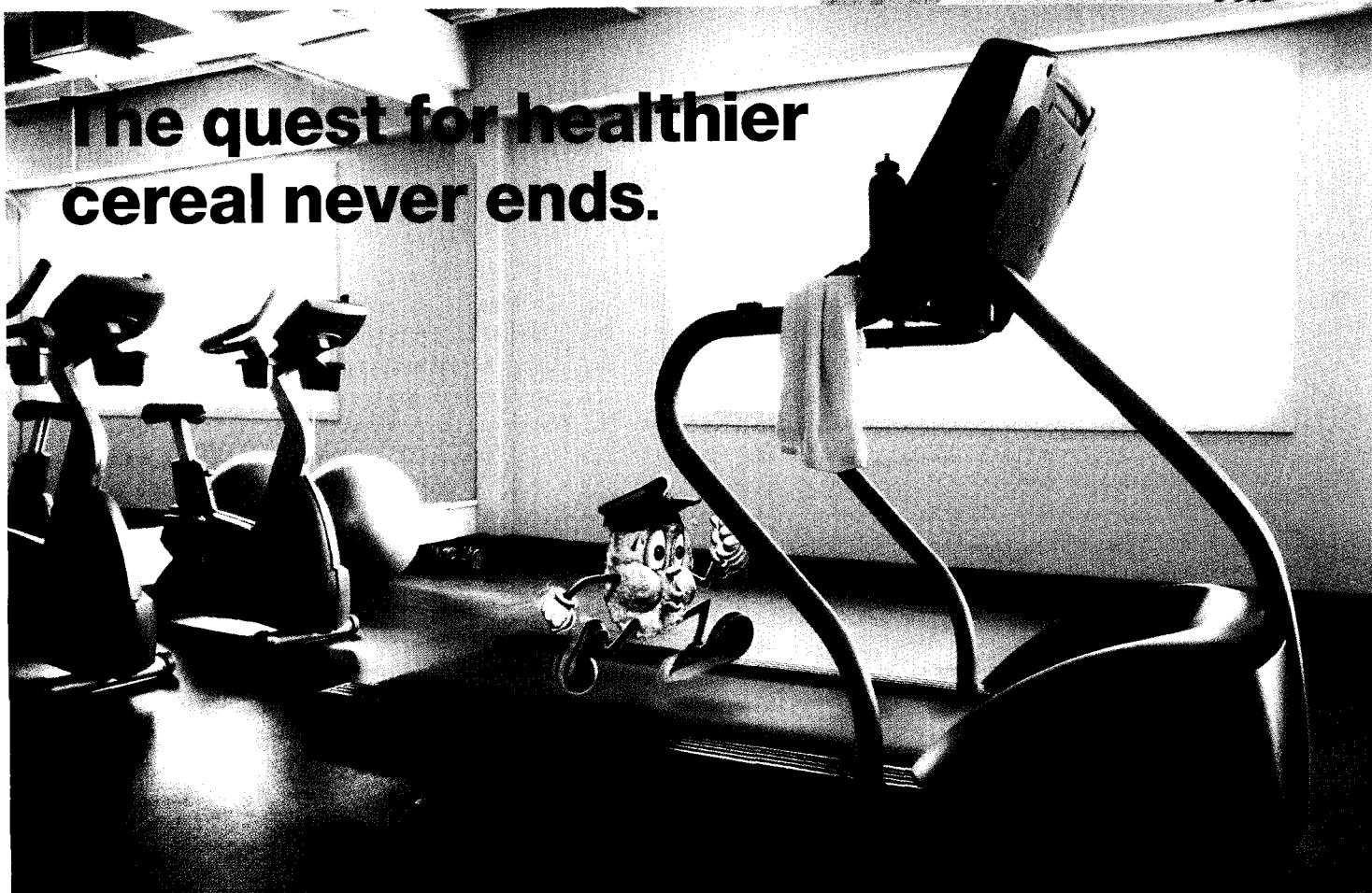
V



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Street Journal poll preferred that the next president be a Democrat by 52–31 percent, and delivered the most negative assessment of the Republican Party in the survey's two-decade history. In 2002, Americans were equally split along partisan lines. A recent Pew study shows that 50 percent of the public identifies as Democratic or leaning that way, while just 35 percent identifies with the GOP.

Rove is a great devotee of the historian Robert H. Wiebe, who also emphasizes the pivotal quality of the 1896 election. Wiebe thought industrialization had launched a great sorting-out process in the 1880s and '90s that reached a dramatic culmination in 1896. He argues in his book *The Search for Order, 1877–1920* that “a decade's accumulated bitterness ultimately flowed into a single national election.”

It seems highly unlikely, though not impossible, that historians will one day view 2000 or 2004 as the kind of realigning election that Rove so badly wanted. Ken Mehlman, a protégé of Rove's and one of the sharper minds in the Republican Party, is adamant that the analysis that led Rove to believe realignment was at hand remains fundamentally correct. “If you look back over the last few

disastrous—than it is now. Considered in that context, Mehlman's analysis rings true.

When I asked Mark Gersh, one of the Democrats' best electoral analysts, for his view of how the political landscape has shifted, he basically agreed with Mehlman, and offered his own perspective on Rove's vision of realignment. “September 11 is what made them, and Iraq is what undermined them, and the truth lies in between the two—and that is that both parties are at parity,” Gersh told me. “There was never any indication that the Republicans were emerging as the majority party. What was happening was that partisanship was actually hardening. Fewer people in both parties were voting for candidates of the other party.” Gersh added that he doesn't believe Democrats are the majority party, and he gives Republicans “at worst a 4-in-10 chance” of holding the presidency in 2008. Even if Rove didn't create a generational shift to the Republican Party, so far at least he does not appear to have ushered in a Democratic one, either.

Nonetheless, certain painful, striking parallels between the presidencies of George Bush and William McKinley can't have been lost on Rove, even if he would be the last

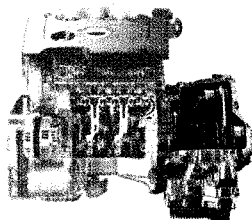
Rove has no antecedent in modern American politics, because no president before Bush thought it wise to give a political adviser so much influence.

decades, an era of politics has run its course,” Mehlman told me. “Both parties achieved some of their highest goals. Democrats got civil rights, women's rights, the New Deal, and recognition of the need for a cleaner environment. Republicans got the defeat of the Soviet Union, less violent crime, lower tax rates, and welfare reform. The public agrees on this. So the issues now become: How do you deal with the terrorist threat? How do you deal with the retirement of the Baby Boomers? How do you deliver health care with people changing jobs? How do you make sure America retains its economic strength with the rise of China and India? How that plays out is something we don't know yet.” As far as what's happened since 2000, Mehlman says, “the conditions remain where they were.” In this view, America is still in the period of great churn, and the 1896 election hasn't happened yet.

Premised as it is on the notion that the past seven years have been a wash, Mehlman's analysis has a self-justifying tinge. At least for now, Republicans have measurably fallen behind where they were in 2000. It's hard to sift underlying political views from temporary rage against Bush, or to anticipate what effect his presidency will have on the Republican Party's fortunes once he's gone. But the effect does seem certain to be less pronounced—less

to admit them. Both originally campaigned almost exclusively on domestic issues, only to have their presidencies dominated by foreign affairs. Neither distinguished himself. *Policy inertia* is the term the historian Richard L. McCormick uses to characterize McKinley's presidency. David Mayhew, the political scientist, writes in his skeptical study *Electoral Realignments*, “Policy innovations under McKinley during 1897–1901 [McKinley was assassinated in 1901] probably rank in the bottom quartile among all presidential terms in American history.” Both sentiments could be applied to Bush.

Perhaps the strangest irony is the foreign adventure that consumed much of McKinley's presidency. Though he lacked Bush's storm-the-barricades temperament, McKinley launched the Spanish-American War partly at the urging of his future vice president, Teddy Roosevelt, and other hawks. As the historian Eric Rauchway has pointed out, after American forces defeated the Spanish navy in the Philippines, the U.S. occupation encountered a bloody postwar insurgency and allegations of torture committed by U.S. troops. Roosevelt, who succeeded McKinley, was hampered by questions about improper force size and commitment of troops and eventually came to rue his plight. “While I have never varied in my feeling that we had



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to hold the Philippines,” he wrote in 1901, “I have varied very much in my feelings whether we were to be considered fortunate or unfortunate in having to hold them.”

To understand Rove’s record, it’s useful to think of the disaster as being divided into foreign and domestic components. Rove had little say in foreign policy. Dick Cheney understood from decades of government experience how to engineer a war he’d pressed for, and still the administration failed to reshape the Middle East. More than anyone outside the Oval Office, Rove was responsible for much of what went wrong on the domestic front—partly because he had never served in government, and he lacked Cheney’s skill at manipulating it. Both men came in believing they had superior insights into history and theoretical underpinnings so strong that their ideas would prevail. But neither man understood how to see them through, and so both failed.

Rove has proved a better analyst of history than agent of historical change, showing far greater aptitude for envisioning sweeping change than for pulling it off. Cheney, through a combination of stealth and nuance, was responsible for steering the Bush administration’s policy in many controversial areas: redirecting foreign policy, winning a series of tax cuts, weakening environmental regulations, asserting the primacy of the executive branch. But his interests seldom coincided with Rove’s overarching goal of realignment. And Rove, forever in thrall to the mechanics of winning by dividing, consistently lacked the ability to transcend the campaign mind-set and see beyond the struggle nearest at hand. In a world made new by September 11, he put terrorism and war to work in an electoral rather than a historical context, and used them as wedge issues instead of as the unifying basis for the new political order he sought.

Why did so many people get Rove so wrong? One reason is that notwithstanding his pretensions to being a world-historic figure, Rove excelled at winning elections, which is, finally, how Washington keeps score. This leads to another reason: Journalists tend to admire tactics above all else. The books on Rove from last year dwell at length on his techniques and accept the premise of Republican dominance practically on tactical skill alone. A corollary to the Cult of the Consultant is the belief that winning an election—especially a tough one you weren’t expected to win—is proof of the ability to govern. But the two are wholly distinct enterprises.

Rove’s vindictiveness has also cowed his critics, at least for the time being. One reason his standing has not yet sunk as low as that of the rest of the Bush administration is his continuing ability to intimidate many of those in a position to criticize him. A Republican consultant who works downtown agreed to talk candidly for this article, but suggested that we have lunch across the river in Pentagon City, Virginia. He didn’t want to be overheard. Working with

Rove, he explained, was difficult enough already: “You’re constantly confronting the big, booming voice of Oz.”

In ways small and large, Rove has long betrayed his lack of understanding of Washington’s institutional subtleties and the effective application of policy, even for the rawest political objectives. The classic example is Rove’s persuading the president in 2002 to impose steep tariffs on foreign steel—a ploy he believed would win over union workers in Rust Belt swing states, ordinarily faithful Democrats, in the next presidential election. This was celebrated as a political masterstroke at the time. But within a year the tariffs were declared illegal by the World Trade Organization and nearly caused a trade war. The uproar precipitated their premature and embarrassing removal.

“It is a dangerous distraction to know as much about politics as Karl Rove knows,” Bruce Reed, the domestic-policy chief in Bill Clinton’s administration, told me. “If you know every single poll number on every single issue and every interest group’s objection and every political factor, it can be paralyzing to try to make an honest policy decision. I think the larger, deeper problem was that they never fully appreciated that long-term success depended on making sure your policies worked.”

Rove has no antecedent in modern American politics, because no president before Bush thought it wise to give a political adviser so much influence. Rove wouldn’t be Rove, in other words, were Bush not Bush. That Vice President Cheney also hit a historic high-water mark for influence says a lot about how the actual president sees fit to govern. All rhetoric about “leadership” aside, Bush will be viewed as a weak executive who ceded far too much authority. Rove’s failures are ultimately his.

Bush will leave behind a legacy long on ambition and short on positive results. History will draw many lessons from his presidency—about the danger of concentrating too much power in the hands of too few, about the risk of commingling politics and policy beyond a certain point, about the cost of constricting the channels of information to the Oval Office. More broadly, as the next group of presidential candidates and their gurus eases the current crew from the stage, Rove’s example should serve as a caution to politicians and journalists.

The Bush administration made a virtual religion of the belief that if you act boldly, others will follow in your wake. That certainly proved to be the case with Karl Rove, for a time. But for all the fascination with what Rove was doing and thinking, little attention was given to whether or not it was working and why. This neglect encompasses many people, though one person with far greater consequences than all the others. In the end, the verdict on George W. Bush may be as simple as this: He never questioned the big, booming voice of Oz, so he never saw the little man behind the curtain. ■

Joshua Green is a senior editor of *The Atlantic*.



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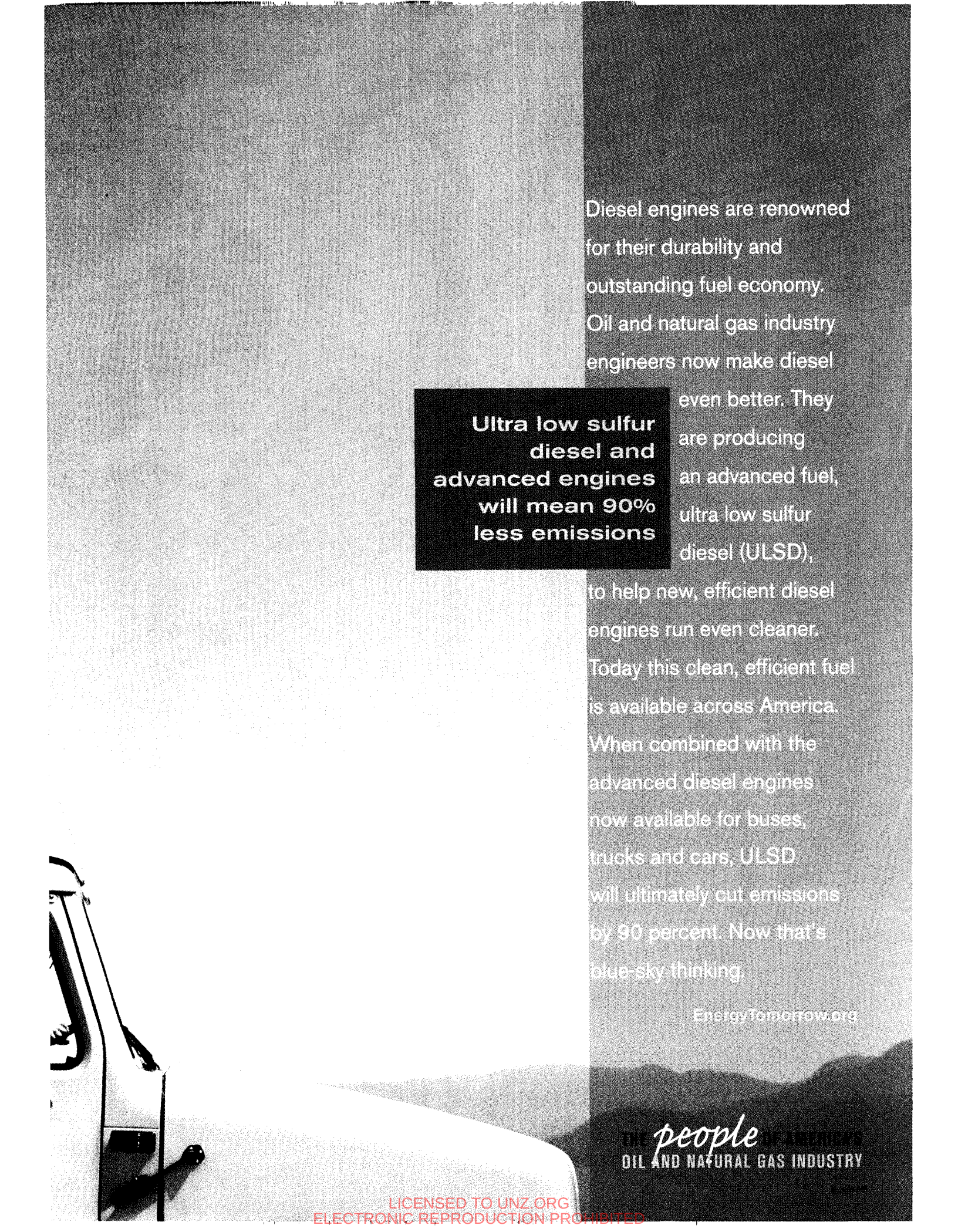
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The only person the speechwriter Michael Gerson made look better than President Bush was Michael Gerson. The shaping of a Washington reputation, as witnessed by a White House colleague

BY MATTHEW SCULLY

Illustration by Steve Brodner

Present at the Creation

Michael J. Gerson, my former speechwriting colleague in the Bush White House, is a talented fellow with a first-rate mind and serious purposes—all of which we can expect to see in his new book, *Heroic Conservatism*. But reading a few insider stories in the first chapter of the book, which his publisher has sent out for publicity, I was not surprised to find that the personal heroics begin early.

By page 3, a “solemn quiet” has fallen over the Oval Office, and we have one of those crossroads moments that come in every White House memoir. Large and consequential matters were in the balance, “the keepers of the budget” were about to crush the hopes of millions, only truth well spoken could save the day, and guess who had the courage to speak it? The conviction and idealism of his words were so characteristic that, in Mike’s telling of the story, President Bush declared, “That’s Gerson being Gerson!”

The president’s little tribute, however, would much better describe what happened after this incident, when the story of “Gerson being Gerson” found its way into a Washington Whispers item by a friend of Mike’s at *U.S. News & World Report*. Someone had to tell the reporter about this inspiring moment, and I have a feeling it wasn’t the keepers of the budget. It was always like this, working with Mike. No good deed went unreported, and many things that never happened were reported as fact. For all

of our chief speechwriter’s finer qualities, the firm adherence to factual narrative is not a strong point. He has chosen the perfect title for his book, because in his telling of a White House story, things often sound a lot more heroic than they actually were.

This tendency to rearrange and romanticize events could be observed in the scores of media profiles and other articles that Mike sat for over the years. When he resigned in June 2006, *USA Today* remembered “the man whose words helped steady the nation” after 9/11—meaning Mike, not President Bush. It was Michael Gerson, said *The Washington Post*, who “crafted the two speeches after the September 11, 2001, attacks that will probably be recorded as Bush’s signal moments of national leadership: the service at the Washington National Cathedral and the address to Congress.” He “filled George Bush’s mouth with golden phrases,” said *The Times* of London. In numerous profiles, Mike was the “conscience of the

White House” and answered also to “moral compass for the Bush presidency.”

In a January 2006 piece, *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* gave the standard portrait:

A devout Christian known to lead fellow staffers in prayer, Gerson is what colleagues call a writer's writer, a big-picture thinker with an instinct for the broad sweep of history who melds the mind of a policy wonk with the heart of a poet.

He is surely the only member of our presidential speechwriting fraternity as celebrated for his moral example as for his literary inspirations. A couple of years ago, *Time* magazine even named the “President's Spiritual Scribe” one of the “25 most influential evangelicals” in America, placing Mike in the company of Billy Graham.

“Leading staffers in prayer” might not have been a bad idea, but in our White House speechwriting office it never happened—unless it was the practice to get the morning oblations out of the way before I showed up. Yet even

ington on September 11, while “my evacuated staff” near the White House was doing, well, whatever. (That would be us, his colleagues, who contributed the sole line in that evening's address, drafted by Karen Hughes, that anyone remembers: “We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them.”) Mike never made it into town that day, but that doesn't prevent him, in his own version, from staying at the center of events—a position from which even the president, as Mike put it in *Newsweek*, looked “stiff and small.”

“Gerson is a ‘planner,’ not a ‘plunger,’” a 2005 *National Journal* profile noted, “meaning that he makes a meticulous outline, which he consults during the writing process.” This is true, and equal care and intensity went into crafting the Gerson image. Colleagues were not in the outline, nor were the normal standards of discretion in White House speechwriting. People have a way of disappearing in Mike's stories. The artful shaping of narrative and editing out of inconvenient detail was never confined to the speechwriting. (The phrase *pulling a Gerson*, as I recently heard it used around the West Wing, does not

“These are beautiful sentences,” Karen Hughes wrote on draft three, “but may overstate the case—there is still shooting going on.”

to point out such errors was futile: the “spiritual scribe” served some larger purpose for the media, as a character of their own invention as much as of his own, and attempts at correction only intruded on a private and mutually satisfying arrangement.

My favorite example came in a piece by Bob Woodward and two other *Washington Post* reporters. The writer's writer and the reporter's reporter spent a lot of time together, and whatever Bob got out of the deal you could always find Mike's reward in print. There had been a September 13, 2001, Oval Office meeting attended by adviser Karen Hughes and three speechwriters—Mike, John McConnell, and me. Early in the meeting President Bush said to us, “We're at war”—an exact quote, and not the sort of moment easily forgotten. In *The Washington Post* account, however, the rest of us have vanished, and the president declares, “Mike, we're at war.”

One word, and history is changed. And not only have colleagues been cleared out, but the attention of Woodward's readers isn't even on the president anymore. Things like this happened all the time with Mike—crowded rooms and collaborative efforts gave way, in the retelling, to the self-involved spectacle of one.

Then there was Mike's *Newsweek* account last year of the high drama he experienced trying to get into Wash-

ington on September 11, while “my evacuated staff” near the White House was doing, well, whatever. (That would be us, his colleagues, who contributed the sole line in that evening's address, drafted by Karen Hughes, that anyone remembers: “We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them.”) Mike never made it into town that day, but that doesn't prevent him, in his own version, from staying at the center of events—a position from which even the president, as Mike put it in *Newsweek*, looked “stiff and small.”

Woodward's trilogy about the Bush years is a tale of speechwriting glory that Mike himself could hardly improve upon. Remember those powerful and moving addresses the president gave after September 11? According to Woodward's *State of Denial*, Mike wrote all of those speeches by himself—and if there were other speechwriters, well, they must not have made it back from the evacuation:

Gerson, a 40-year-old evangelical Christian who had majored in theology at evangelist Billy Graham's alma mater, Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois, had written all of Bush's memorable post-9/11 speeches, including the one he gave at Washington's National Cathedral on September 14, 2001—“This conflict has begun on the timing and terms of others. It will end in a way, and at an hour of our choosing”—as well as his remarks before a joint session of Congress on September 20, 2001: “Americans should not expect one battle but a lengthy campaign.” Gerson had written Bush's 2002 State of the Union speech identifying

Iraq, Iran and North Korea as an “Axis of Evil” connecting terrorism with weapons of mass destruction, and had also come up with the intellectual and historical roots for Bush’s “preemption” doctrine speech, delivered at West Point in June 2002—“The war on terrorism will not be won on the defensive.”

How do I break the news to Bob Woodward that his high-placed source wrote not a single one of the lines quoted above, at best a third of any of the speeches he mentions, and that the National Cathedral address was half-written before Mike even entered the room?

Without fear of contradiction—because it’s all in the presidential records—I can report here that Michael Gerson never wrote a single speech by himself for President Bush. From beginning to end, every notable speech, and a huge proportion of the rest, was written by a team of speechwriters, working in the same office and on the same computer. Few lines of note were written by Mike, and none at all that come to mind from the post-9/11 addresses—not even “axis of evil.”

He allowed false assumptions, and also encouraged them. Among chummy reporters, he created a fictionalized, “Mike, we’re at war” version of presidential speechwriting, casting himself in a grand and solitary role. The narrative that Mike Gerson presented to the world is a story of extravagant falsehood. He has been held up for us in six years’ worth of coddling profiles as the great, inspiring, and idealistic exception of the Bush White House. In reality, Mike’s conduct is just the most familiar and depressing of Washington stories—a history of self-seeking and media manipulation that is only more distasteful for being cast in such lofty terms.

There are rewards for such behavior, and in Mike’s case the Washington establishment has raised him up as one of its own—a status complete with a columnist’s perch at *The Washington Post*. There is a downside, too, measured in the lost esteem of friends and in the tainting of real gifts and achievements. At his best, Mike is a serious man, with an active Christian faith that could be seen in his work as an adviser in the president’s program for helping AIDS and malaria victims in Africa—a vital contribution and well deserving of praise. Yet being a part of such efforts was never reward enough for Mike, and there was always more to the story, always an angle.

Merriman Smith, a White House correspondent from the 1940s to the 1960s, wrote in his book *A President Is Many Men* of Clark Clifford at the beginning of his career as a figure of renown in Washington. After the special counsel settled into his White House office, Smith wrote, “word passed that Clifford had become one of the top idea men for Mr. Truman.” He “attracted a steady flow of reporters and photographers,” and soon tested the patience of colleagues. “During one week when Clifford

was featured in several big national magazines, a White House old-timer wisecracked, ‘What the hell is going on—Clark Clifford Week?’”

For us, it was always Mike Gerson Week, with the difference that the self-publicizing was accompanied by pretense. And nobody outside the speechwriting department ever seemed to wonder what the hell was going on.

POWER AND PIETY

Like so much else, it started with Karl Rove. Karl understood, after the misfortunes of the 1996 Dole campaign, that the party would need a “different kind of Republican” and a different kind of speechwriter to go with him. In his engaging book about the 2000 campaign, Stuart Stevens, a Bush media adviser, describes “compassionate conservatism” as a matter of having to “face reality” and recalls the meeting in which Karl explained how it would work. Every big Republican idea—the Laffer Curve, the Gingrich revolution—is first scrawled out on a napkin, and in Stuart’s telling of the story there’s one for compassionate conservatism, too. He and Karl were at an Austin coffee shop in April 1999, and Karl laid out the logic of Bush II:

“He’s a different kind of Republican. Compassionate conservatism.” Karl scribbled on a napkin. He was drawing little boxes—one was labeled BUSH, another BIG STATE GUV. He made COMPASSIONATE CONSERVATISM a big box that overlapped the others. This was what Lee Atwater would have called “the ditch we’re going to die in.” If compassionate conservatism “worked,” the campaign worked.

To keep the campaign on the high road, Karl turned to Mike in early 1999. At the time a senior editor at *U.S. News*, Mike had been a ghostwriter for Charles Colson, the evangelical founder of Prison Fellowship Ministries, and a speechwriter for Senator Dan Coats of Indiana and for the Dole campaign. He had a reputation for religious conviction, and the *National Journal* profile describes his first encounter with Bush as “the calling of the apostle.”

My own, less providential summons came in a phone call from Mike in late April 1999: Would I be interested in moving to Texas? I was just then starting a book, but the offer made a lot of sense. Among other reasons, I was quite fond of Mike, whom I had first met on the Dole campaign, and figured it would be great fun to work with him. Our previous joint effort had been to finish a book proposal that Mike had begun for Senator Coats—the work was to be called *Power and Piety*—and, oddly enough, it hadn’t gone well at all. Seeing the two of us sitting all afternoon on January 23, 1997, staring at the blank computer screen in my apartment, you’d never have guessed we were destined for future collaborations, and on works even more powerful

and pious. But I found Mike to be hilarious company, a side that doesn't really come out in the profiles. When White House staff secretary Harriet Miers decreed in 2003 that we were using too many contractions in speeches—getting just a little too informal and “unpresidential”—Mike forwarded the e-mail to John McConnell and me with a note saying that if we ever again quoted Todd Beamer, one of the heroes of Flight 93, be sure to make it: “Let us roll.”

John completed the speechwriting department in Austin, arriving on January 2, 2000. He and I had become friends while working for Vice President Dan Quayle. It was John who strolled into my office one day in 1992, looked over a speech on the “cultural elite” theme that was getting great play in those days, and penciled in one of the more notable lines of that pre-compassionate-conservative era: “I wear their scorn as a badge of honor.” In the small universe of speechwriters in Washington, we both wound up working for the Dole campaign. For all the praise that speeches by our “different kind of Republican” received in 2000—for a new tone, so refreshing compared with that of our previous standard-bearer—somehow no one ever noticed that the different kind of speechwriters were three of the same guys who had written for Dole in '96. (And when you look at some of that stuff written for Senator Dole—“There are those who seek to focus on what divides us ... I prefer to focus on what unites us”—it has a familiar ring.)

Unlike the directionless Dole campaign, Bush 2000 was a sharp, disciplined operation. And a case could be made that we three overdid things a bit, with occasionally grandiose rhetoric and a tendency to preen. In speechwriting, the game was always “big ball,” and Mike had a particular knack for it. I used to kid him that I could guess the direction of his outline for any given speech on the compassionate-conservative theme, because the Gerson formula never varied: We begin with great and inexorable “callings” of history, then move on to hard moral “duties” and “nonnegotiable demands” of conscience, proceeding through the bramble patch of “temptations”—not to be merely avoided but “*actively confronted*”—arriving in due course at the solution, and with that the “confident hope” of a better day. Mike's conceptual architecture was always indispensable, with a kind of thematic big-think that was beyond my reach.

John, a Yale-educated attorney, brought a more grounded and mature tone to the writing, and usually kept us from going overboard. Often in Bush speeches you will find one slightly overstated sentence followed by another of elegant understatement, as in a 2002 address to the German parliament: “Those who despise human freedom will attack it on every continent. Those who seek missiles and terrible weapons are also familiar with the map of Europe.” The first is Mike and the second is John. In John's hands, moral and religious ideas also had a more solid feel—more

in the tone, for example, of the remarks that he and I wrote for delivery after the execution of Timothy McVeigh:

This morning, the United States of America carried out the severest sentence for the gravest of crimes. The victims of the Oklahoma City bombing have been given not vengeance, but justice. And one young man met the fate he chose for himself six years ago ... Under the laws of our country, the matter is concluded ... May God in his mercy grant peace to all; to the lives that were taken six years ago, to the lives that go on, and to the life that ended today.

As a general rule in Bush speeches, if the writing is graceful, judicious, and understated, and makes you think about the subject at hand instead of anyone's particular craftsmanship or religiosity—there's a better-than-even chance that it is by John McConnell. John is always the first to deflect attention elsewhere, a reflex of modesty and good manners that Mike and I witnessed many times. The truth of the matter is that of the three of us, John is by far the man most like Bush himself in his personal rectitude and goodness of heart, and these qualities shine through in all our best work for the president.

‘THE SIRENS OF BAGHDAD ARE QUIET’

In Austin and in Washington, we wrote speeches together on a single computer, in office conditions that John described as resembling the “back room of a cheap restaurant.” And though the rhetoric of President Bush has been praised for its “high seriousness,” it wasn't that way in the drafting.

It was a rare day when Karl Rove, Josh Bolten, Dan Bartlett, or someone else didn't open the door to see what we were all howling about, or to add to the fun with their own routines and Hill Country antics. Even on the dreariest days—slogging through a tax, education, or Chamber of Commerce speech—Mike and John and I endlessly entertained one another, with all the running jokes and gags you'd expect three guys in a room to develop. Education speeches in particular—with their endlessly complicated programs and slightly puffed-up theories, none of which we could ever explain quite to the satisfaction of our policy people—were always good for a laugh. As John observed in late 2003, around draft 20 in the typically chaotic revising of an education speech, “We've taken the country to war with less hassle than this.”

We once wrote, “This nation will prepare. We will not live in fear. We choose to fight them there, so we don't have to fight them here,” only to read it aloud and realize it sounded less like Winston Churchill than Dr. Seuss. When one of us offered up a bad idea, we'd all laugh—the offender as much as the other two—and then launch into extended parodies of similarly pompous



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sentiments that could be added to the speech. When one writer was “on,” the teasing took the form of exaggerated deference. With enough prodding, John would favor us with one of his impersonations—a repertoire ranging from a very impressive Harry Truman to the “Matt Foley” motivational-speaker character of the late Chris Farley. This may not sound like much, but for three guys working up the presidential turkey-pardon remarks for the fourth year in a row, it’s Vegas material.

Some moments seem ludicrous only in retrospect, as when we wrote the speech that Bush would give on the deck of the USS *Abraham Lincoln*, on May 1, 2003—remembered now for the “Mission Accomplished” banner. As usual, Mike had come in with a grand, historic vision for the effort—along with a literary antecedent to imitate. This was another habit of his, and with each speech you could always predict which models he would turn to. When it was a speech on race, in would come Mike with a sheaf of heavily underlined Martin Luther King Jr. speeches. For speeches on poverty, it was time for more compassionate-conservative fervor, drawn secondhand from the addresses of Robert F. Kennedy. For updates on the war against terrorism, we could expect to see Mike’s well-worn copies of JFK and FDR speeches plopped on the table for instruction, and for imitation that when unchecked (as in the second inaugural) could slip perilously close to copying.

In writing the *Abraham Lincoln* speech, this habit of historical reenactment spelled trouble. As John and I sat down to get started, in marched Mike with a muffin in one hand and Douglas MacArthur’s “the guns are silent” speech—delivered on the deck of the USS *Missouri* at the end of World War II—in the other. And this time Mike had worked up his own memorable variation: “The sirens of Baghdad are quiet. The desert has returned to silence. The Battle of Iraq is over, and the United States and our allies have prevailed.” Much as I’d like to record that I had the good sense to object, I think I even added my own touches to the glory of the moment. The honored role here in averting rhetorical disaster was assumed by Donald Rumsfeld, who expressed alarm at this overreach, and by Karen Hughes, who often checked our more blustery outbursts. “These are beautiful sentences,” she wrote on draft three, “but may overstate the case—there is still shooting going on.”

Every time, line by line, the three of us talked the speeches through, taking turns at the keyboard and generally agreeing when one of us had come up with the right thought, sentence, or edit. For important speeches, we spent hours on a single paragraph, and in a day got through maybe 500 words of a 3,800-word effort. In that room, at least, vanity was kept under close guard, and, if only to break the silence, you had to be willing to offer up thoughts and phrases that might fall flat. In even the most unusable line or unformed thought, there might be some little glimmer of a better idea to move the work forward.

Mike’s outlines were always sound and sometimes inspired—although after a while we started doing the outlines together as well. And in both cases these consisted mostly of placeholders to capture the shape of a thought. For a crucial section in remarks written for Bush during the Florida recount, the notes read:

At some point, something becomes something. And something becomes something. Loser becomes sore loser. Justified case becomes. At some point the voting must end ... rule of law, not endless lawsuits. Call for recount, search for new results. Endless litigation. Ballot boxes and courts. War of words, something of lawyers.

When we sat down together this became: “At some point, we must have an end. At some point, the counting of votes must stop, and the votes must count. At some point, the law must prevail, and the lawyers must go home.”

‘A UNIQUE (AND ENJOYABLE) WORKING RELATIONSHIP’

The wonderful thing was how we tended to draw out each other’s strengths and check each other’s faults—somehow each recognizing, for all our differences in style and temperament, the same standard of polished but conversational rhetoric. The method was really a kind of writing and editing all at once, with the further advantage of speaking the words as they naturally came to mind before they were written on the screen. It had a way of keeping things on track.

A reporter from *The New York Times Magazine* spent some time with the three of us during the writing of the joint-session speech of September 20, 2001, and gave an accurate account of how it came together:

Gerson, Scully and McConnell began on the Taliban. Scully started: “We’re not deceived by their pretenses to piety.” Gerson wrote: “They’re the heirs of all the murderous ideologies of the 20th century. By sacrificing human life to serve their radical visions, by abandoning every value except the will to power, they follow in the path of Fascism and Nazism and imperial Communism.” Scully added, “And they will follow that path all the way to where it ends.” They paused. Where would it end? They didn’t know. But there were plenty of ready-made phrases around. McConnell threw out five or six, like crumbs from his pocket. They liked the idea of predicting the end of the Taliban’s reign of terror. “You know, history’s unmarked grave,” McConnell said. The group bounced the phrase around until McConnell came up with: “It will end in discarded lies.” Gerson liked that, too. So the line read, “history’s unmarked grave of discarded lies.”

Some think
barren.

We think
source.



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On September 13, 2001, when we sat down to begin that address, all we had on the screen were a few notes, such as:

Darkness. Light ... harm/evil ... challenge ... enemy ... defeat and destroy. Eyes open ... alerted. We've been a continent shielded by oceans. Carnage known only in Civil War. Foe: Political ideology, not a religion. Our view of the world—'challenge we did not ask for in a world we did not make.' People turn to America. Much grief but many questions. Who is the enemy?

It was in a shorthand that only we could understand, each phrase a reminder of themes that we three—along with National Security Council speechwriter John Gibson, who always helped with foreign-policy addresses—had talked through with the president, Condoleezza Rice, Hughes, Rove, and others.

Above all, we shared a respect and affectionate regard for George W., the straight-up guy we'd come to know in Austin. Though our rhetoric did have a way of overdoing the drama sometimes, none of that was ever to be confused with the personal qualities of the man we served, who in the opinion of those who worked there was the actual conscience of the White House. I have never encountered a politician less impressed with himself. There was no surer way to get a laugh out of Bush than with some personally grandiose sentiment, or even an excessive use of "I." He paused once during the rehearsal of a speech when we'd gone overboard with the global-freedom-agenda rhetoric: "What is this stuff? I sound like Spartacus or someone." A similarly overwrought speech inspired him to rise and read it aloud with the exaggerated solemnity of Edward Everett Hale or some other 19th-century orator, to laughter all around. Modesty is a very becoming quality in people of his standing. There are CEOs and Washington bureau chiefs who carry themselves with a greater sense of their own importance than this president of the United States ever has.

After one of our "death marches"—John's term for writing a State of the Union address—Mike said that it was a rare thing in life when you can spend nine days in the same room working with the same people and drive in on the morning of the 10th day still looking forward to it. He put it even better in late 2003 when I was thinking about moving along:

I hope you will think about the timing. This [2004] election will be important to the direction of the country, and our contribution will be made mainly from the State of the Union in January to the convention speech this summer. After that point, the themes are pretty much set, the huge speeches given. In this period, John and I will need your help. We

have established a unique (and enjoyable) working relationship, and, frankly, I don't want to face this last major challenge without your help, and without your company. We are talking about a little over half a year—and after four years, I hope that isn't too much to ask. I can't set your course, but I think this is important, and I know it is important to me.

We knew the feeling, John and I. It extended outward, too, in a sense of daily camaraderie with all the others on staff who invariably contributed ideas, lines, edits, and other touches essential to the work.

'THE FINE CHINA'

So it was a perplexing experience to read press accounts of Bush speeches that left the distinct impression that they were the work of just one man.

I first noticed the problem in Austin, when we were sitting together at the shared laptop and Bush would call. Just like that, the fellowship of the moment vanished, and one heard the singular instead of the plural: "Yes, Governor, I'm working on it now ... Mm hmm ... Mm hmm ... I can have it done by then, yes ... I've got some lines here I think you'll like."

When speeches by the three of us were particularly good, Mike attended meetings about them by himself, and then reassembled the team for even minor revisions, no matter how late the hour. When speeches by the three of us were more pedestrian, he made sure that his name disappeared from the draft. Reporters came and went at campaign headquarters, the drawn shades on Mike's interior window signaling their presence and discouraging introductions. The three of us ran into E. J. Dionne of *The Washington Post* in Philadelphia during convention week, and Mike's collaborators on the convention address rated an awkward, "Oh, and these guys are, uh, writers for the campaign."

Likewise, the only time Mike ever appeared disturbed by the approach of public attention was during the preparation of the *New York Times Magazine* account of the making of the joint-session speech, when the magazine's fact-checkers started calling to confirm such details as who wrote what. Fact-checkers of tomorrow will find somewhere in the presidential archives a frantic e-mail from Mike in which a colleague was ordered not to take any further calls from *Times* fact-checkers.

Mike once said to us, in passing, "You guys had your administration"—meaning Bush-Quayle—and this seemed to explain his program for Bush 2000. Even during the campaign, he had apparently kept our colleagues—who all had better things to think about, anyway—unsure about how speeches got written. However things worked, they worked, and that was what mattered. Mike attended senior staff meetings, and what went on there could be glimpsed

in a cover note he sent his superiors that found its way to us. We had just spent hours working up some humor for the 2000 convention speech. Mike sent the material along to senior staff, with a reminder to be lenient in judgment, since “it’s not easy to write jokes sitting alone in a room.”

In a rapture of self-congratulation following coverage of one or another campaign speech in 2000, he actually told us that Bush and the senior staff viewed his contributions, well, *differently* from ours: “I think they look at my writing as the fine china, to be taken out on special occasions.” What to say when a friend and colleague lays that one on you?

Maybe you have brushed up against such people in your own workplace. If so, you know that it is a peculiar vice, this kind of credit hounding. One is left almost disoriented by the gall of it. It was amazing that a friend could carry on like this in full view and still act as if nothing were out of order. The sheer pettiness of such conduct served to repel corrective action, because who wants to be drawn into little games of guile and manipulation? Mostly, though, I felt so embarrassed for Mike that it was just too

of war and the “whisper of duty above the shout of fear.” America’s greatest generation was passing away, “and they left our country a ‘golden legend to her people.’” Now “the rising generations of this country have their own appointment with greatness,” and “after eight years in the wilderness, we can see the promised land.” My generation has stumbled, but I believe we can soar.”

Of these lines—delicate pieces of the fine china—“appointment with greatness” actually made it into the final speech, having survived 18 drafts collaboratively written. I happened to be sitting at Mike’s laptop when it came time for us to send the very last draft to senior staff, and Mike, noticing that I had cc’d John and myself, stopped me: “Don’t do that! You can print copies from here!” I said, “Michael, *why* can’t I copy John and me?” This brought a frantic admission: “Because they don’t know you’re involved!” “And why is it a secret that we’re doing this together?” Because it was all very confidential, Mike explained as he rushed off—senior staff didn’t want anything leaking out. This performance was repeated at the White House, when Mike insisted that the usual author

Few lines of note in Bush’s speeches were written by Mike, and none at all that come to mind from the post-9/11 addresses— not even “AXIS OF EVIL.”

unpleasant to bring up. Besides, for President Bush, we writers were always “the troika,” “the lads,” “the team,” and sometimes even “the A-team.” He knew how the work got done, and his good opinion was sufficient.

The problem did come up a few times in plain words, however, and Mike’s reactions could be even more jarring than his dreamy self-regard when left unchallenged. I think particularly of the 2000 convention address, the “crafting” of which became a staple of early Gerson profiles and, even before the speech was delivered, inspired an Associated Press piece titled “The Craftsman Behind George Bush’s Acceptance Speech.” For more than a week Mike was gone from our midst, working alone to compose the address (“with a rollerball pen on yellow legal pads,” as the AP described it) in the private apartment of the governor’s father at his presidential library, at Texas A&M University. After months of joint authorship, it was time to lay out the fine china, and convention delegates were going to see the complete set.

But the muse had somehow missed the appointment in College Station, and what Mike came back with was an outline—clever, ambitious, and usable, as always, but in the way of actual writing no more than a bundle of overwrought phrases and brittle loftyisms. Among the highlights were the “heat and hate and horror”

identifications not appear on drafts going to the president, or pouted when our department secretary put all three names there anyway. He seemed to think this was standard practice—just “the way it’s done” in Washington.

‘THE SOLITUDE OF WRITING’

I have never cared much for the first inaugural address, though I reviewed it extensively with Mike, and the first 200 or so words are not his work at all. John had no part in the effort, and it shows in passages that manage to be derivative, simple, and wordy all at the same time—doubtless a product of the wearisome calculation and “performing writer” routine that went into its production.

There is a line in the speech that goes, “Sometimes in life we are called to do great things. But as a saint of our times has said, every day we are called to do small things with great love.” While Mike was drafting the speech, I was somewhere on the outskirts of Tar Heel, North Carolina, researching my book *Dominion*. As we were editing the speech by phone—Mike in the transition office in Washington, me in a parked rental car by a factory farm—we were interrupted by a call from my old friend Jay Heiler, a political consultant in Arizona. Jay suggested the Mother Teresa quote. I wrote it down, hit “Flash,” and passed the quote on to Mike, who immediately found a place for it

in the inaugural. In a Gerson profile in *USA Today*, these lovely words of the saint—called in from Phoenix via a hog farm in North Carolina—became further evidence of the man's near-mystical spirituality: He had a special devotion to Mother Teresa. "A favorite Gerson icon, she surfaces again in Bush's inaugural."

Another line in that speech reminds us, "No insignificant person was ever born." David Kusnet, a former Clinton speechwriter, offered it as evidence in *The New Republic* that "Gerson's eloquence made the president seem compassionate, conciliatory, and conservative, all at the same time." The line is actually from a column I did for *The Wall Street Journal* after the death of former Pennsylvania Governor Robert Casey, my onetime employer, and in the inaugural was offered as a little tribute to a great man. A simple line, but Mike liked it enough to accept praise for the sentence, and he uses it again, without quotation marks, in the first chapter of *Heroic Conservatism*.

My most vivid memory of Mike at Starbucks is one I have labored in vain to shake. We were working on a State of the Union address in John's office when suddenly Mike was called away for an unspecified appointment, leaving us to "keep going." We learned only later, from a chance conversation with his secretary, where he had gone, and it was a piece of Washington self-promotion for the ages: At the precise moment when the State of the Union address was being *drafted* at the White House by John and me, Mike was off pretending to *craft* the State of the Union in longhand for the benefit of a reporter.

He yearned for escape sometimes and preferred the "buzz" of the coffee shop to the "solitude" of his White House office, Mike explained in a 2002 ABC News *Nightline* segment, "Up Close: Michael Gerson." This is a lengthy discourse on the craft of speechwriting (and indeed on how speechwriting "cultivates a sense of humility," as Mike told *Nightline*) that happily I missed at the

It was always like this, working with Mike. No good deed went unreported, and many things that never happened were reported as fact.

The only time our chief speechwriter was ever heard to say things like "I didn't write that" or "That was John's idea" or "I got that from Karen" was in the case of our more pedestrian efforts together. And then suddenly we'd find ourselves singled out for special attention, lavished with explicit recognition in mentions to the president or in e-mails that made sure everyone understood that this latest offering from the speechwriting shop was not to be confused with the fine china.

Perhaps you have read that Mike wrote some of the most memorable post-9/11 addresses in longhand, sitting by himself in a Starbucks. His colleagues heard that rumor as well, and in the profiles it became as much a part of the persona as Left Bank cafés or Sartre or London pubs to Shakespeare. *The New Yorker's* profile came with a playful sketch of Mike dressed as Cyrano de Bergerac, quill in hand, Starbucks cup next to the ink bottle. Starbucks was "where he frequently writes speeches," noted the magazine. As *USA Today* captured the scene, "He chews up uni-ball pens by the packet, scribbling out Bush's most acclaimed speeches in longhand on a yellow legal pad. He sometimes takes days to produce a first draft. And he does some of his best writing in the nearest Starbucks." In a Fox News "Power Player of the Week" send-off after Mike had announced his resignation, Chris Wallace explained in the closing shot: "If you're wondering about all those legal pads on Gerson's desk, in this age of computers, he liked to write the first draft of presidential speeches by longhand."

time and only came upon recently. To fully appreciate the dramatic tension here, just remember that as a matter of undeniable fact—entered in the permanent records of the United States, which will include more than 10,000 different speech drafts saved on the computer we shared—every major Bush speech of the first term was written from start to finish in the office of John McConnell, by the good old team.

During the *Nightline* interview, we hear the voice of President Bush at the National Cathedral saying: "We are here in the middle hour of our grief," "This conflict was begun on the timing and terms of others. It will end in a way, and at an hour, of our choosing," and other lovely and powerful lines written in my presence by John. And then we hear the guest explain how he himself wrote them:

NIGHTLINE: When you're writing a speech, how do you find the words that fit the man?

GERSON: For me, it is a, you know, process of drafting, redrafting, and reading aloud ...

NIGHTLINE: How do you, physically, write a speech? I mean, are you working at a computer keyboard, or what do you do?

GERSON: Well, actually, when I'm working on the initial phases of a speech, it's hard to work in my

windowless basement office at the White House. I actually like to work with people around.

NIGHTLINE: But you have an office in the West Wing, which is pretty good real estate.

GERSON: I do. It is—it's nice, and I'm glad to be there. But the fact is that I, in that stage of writing, I'll often go to a Starbucks or some other place to put together ideas. I guess in some ways it breaks the solitude of writing to be around a buzz of people. And I'll do that on notepads and put together my ideas. And then, at some stage, you do, you know, go to a computer screen.

Notice how the comfortable use of personal pronouns—I go to Starbucks, I make notes—suddenly shifts into generality in the description of actual speechwriting: “You do, you know, go to a computer screen.” For, of course, the computer screen to which he returned from Starbucks every time was John's computer screen, in the office where we were working—probably even during this interview—and where others had written the very passages that *Nightline* played in the background. Reading the transcript, I found myself almost rooting for Mike to get out of there *fast*, without having to come clean with the whole miserable tale.

PRINTING THE LEGEND

Once you gain a reputation in Washington, things have a nice way of falling into place, in a print-the-legend fashion. John and I had the experience of working on the president's eulogy for Ronald Reagan, and about midway through the effort getting an e-mailed “bulletin” from a Washington news service called the Frontrunner: “Gerson Writing Reagan Eulogy for Bush.” It cited a *Los Angeles Times* story that provided some further details: “The eulogy is being prepared by Bush's chief speechwriter, Michael Gerson, who also wrote the president's moving speech for a memorial service in the same cathedral after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.” The three of us spent two of our best days laboring over a speech delivered on Goree Island in West Africa, only to have *The New Yorker* pronounce it “perhaps Gerson's most extraordinary speech.”

It was the same story with “axis of evil”: assumptions casually made and casually left uncorrected. And the most absurd thing about the episode, the sole occasion when credit snatching ever came up for public discussion, was that our colleague David Frum took the rap. David is a highly conscientious person, a gentleman, and, as the most accomplished author on our staff, hardly in need of exaggerating his achievements. Yet during that whole business, as another writer's name started appearing in newspapers, now suddenly it was our chief speechwriter who was alarmed by an unseemly display of self-publicizing. The

studio makeup scarcely washed away from “Up Close: Michael Gerson,” he let it be known that he did not approve: “Senior White House staff,” reported *The Daily Telegraph*, “have sharply criticised Mr. Frum in private for taking the credit for crafting the phrase instead of allowing it to be attributed to President Bush. Mr. Gerson, in particular, is understood to have been annoyed by the disclosure.”

What actually happened is that David came up with the phrase “axis of hatred” and e-mailed it, along with some other lines, to John, Mike, and me. We copied the material into the jumble of onscreen notes we kept beneath our working texts. Mike thought we should use the phrase, and we added it to the text. I said, “I hate *hatred*”—which brought to mind the ineffectual “forces of hatred” favored by Clinton speechwriters—and proposed going with *evil* instead, since we were already confronting *evildoers*, *wickedness*, and the like. It was agreed—“States like these, and



“THE A-TEAM”: John McConnell, Michael Gerson, and the author at work in McConnell's office on the 2002 State of the Union address

their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world”—and we moved on.

For a time, I congratulated myself on at least preventing the even more melodramatic “axis of hatred” from marching into history—though, looking back, I suppose “axis of evil” was a case of how the very intensity of these speeches could sometimes give events a false momentum and fill the air with needless drama. Good phrase or bad, however, that's how it got in there. It was not added by Mike—though he assured *The New Yorker*, “Evil exists, and it has to be confronted.”

Great works carried out collaboratively make for an undeniably less interesting story than the solitary genius scribbling away. If you write profiles, or submit to them, it complicates things. And when we are given credit for things we didn't do, or feel tempted to grab at undeserved acclaim, we show what we are made of.

I think of our White House colleague Peter Wehner, who once picked up a magazine and was mortified to find himself improperly credited with writing parts of the National Cathedral address. With unhesitating honesty, he e-mailed me to say, “As a rule, I don't think speechwriters

should claim credit for this or that speech ... And while it's nice for folks to implicitly ascribe beautiful words to me, they were someone else's (yours, or John's, or Mike's), and I'm sorry it happened ... I've already dropped John & Mike a note." But this gracious example, so characteristic of Pete Wehner, never caught on. For all of Mike's moralizing on grander matters, he just never understood that a modest round of merited applause is worth far more than a standing ovation undeserved.

Harder to explain than one man's foolish vanity is the gullibility of those who indulged him. Mike had the benefit, I suppose, of presenting an easy positive story to reporters generally hostile to President Bush. If only to keep up appearances or reward a faithful source, reporters had to find a happier angle on the administration. They needed something nice to say, and some color to go with it, and why not start with the bookish evangelical?

After a while, Gerson profiles took on an interchangeable quality, as if mere parts of the same tedious tract, and lost in the haze of sanctimony were the real qualities of the man I know—especially Mike's ability to spot the very kind of pretension that filled his own press coverage. It was the Nixon speechwriter William Safire who, in his enduring 1975 book, *Before the Fall*, captured the false note heard throughout the whole self-indulgent exercise. By adopting a certain tone and manner, Safire observed,

the writer thereby not only buttresses his reputation for having a passion for anonymity but gains fame. This is known as ostentatious self-effacement, and it works its oily way far more effectively than less subtle forms of self-aggrandizement.

THE 'CONTRIBUTOR'

The worst of my former colleague's conduct was not mere vanity, however. It was not even the pettiness and selfishness, or the casual treatment of the trust of friends. The real offense was to the president. And the most appalling part of the story is that such behavior could continue even in the weeks after 9/11—no "new normal" in the speechwriting department. Indeed, there was actually a commemorative edition of the joint-session speech sold in bookstores under the title *Our Mission and Our Moment*. It is still being sold by Amazon as a work "by Mike Gerson." But at least George W. Bush isn't overlooked entirely. He gets some of the credit too—as a "contributor."

As it happens, that title line in the joint-session speech—"We have found our mission and our moment"—was inspired by my observation of the contributor's conduct in the days after 9/11, by the way he carried himself and the things he said to us. He was not a "president stiff and small," as Mike described him in *Newsweek*, and the clear, manful, and gracious tone that comes across in all of those post-9/11 speeches was not some invention of the speechwriters.

Six years later, with all that has gone wrong in Iraq, I know one is now supposed to sigh with regret at how mistaken we all were about Bush in those days, how foolish of us to think the man had greatness in him. As Jonathan Rauch reflected a year ago in these pages, Americans "thought they saw a Churchill," but all that's gone and now we know better. And yet I think I recognize greatness when it steps before me, and the sight of George W. Bush in those days left an impression that has never worn off.

It was apparent when he stood on the ruins of the World Trade Center, and again in his "I'm a loving guy" moment in the Oval Office. And we speechwriters saw his qualities of character just as vividly when the cameras were withdrawn. In hundreds of pre-9/11 speeches, we had been straining for the unforgettable turn of phrase, the noble sentiment, the heroic gesture. Now, nobility and heroism were actually on display, and it turned out he could do it without us.

The National Cathedral and joint-session speeches marked a clean break in our rhetoric, a casting-off of the fine china and the stuff of Starbucks. No more stilted generational summonses, no more made-up "callings." Here, finally, was the real thing—a real calling with real heroism—and the words we found for all of this could have been written for that man and no other.

Some of the most moving lines in the joint-session address were just slightly polished versions of what Bush himself had told us: "Tonight we are a country awakened to danger and called to defend freedom. Our grief has turned to anger, and anger to resolution ... We will not tire, we will not falter, and we will not fail." As John, Karl, and I watched from the side of the House floor that night, it was a case of presidential speechwriting working exactly as it should, with the words spoken by the very man who inspired them.

That's where presidential speechwriters belong—off to the side, where even the best there ever was, Ted Sorensen, was always content to stay. Speechwriting is a job with many privileges, but also its own rules, temptations, and demands of conscience, obvious and nonnegotiable. The work has rewards enough without each speechwriter stepping forward to give his or her name its own permanent shine in history.

In times of trial—of historic drama and of true presidential greatness, as after 9/11—it adds nothing useful for a speechwriter to be endlessly holding forth on the craft and performing for television crews. It only diminishes the moment and the achievement. In the presidency of George W. Bush, these achievements were the finest we ever shared, all of us together. And they require no embellishment or shading of truth. ▀

Matthew Scully, a writer living in Southern California, is the author of *Dominion* (2002). From July 1999 until August 2004, he served as a senior speechwriter for President Bush.

A SIGN OF **HOPE.**



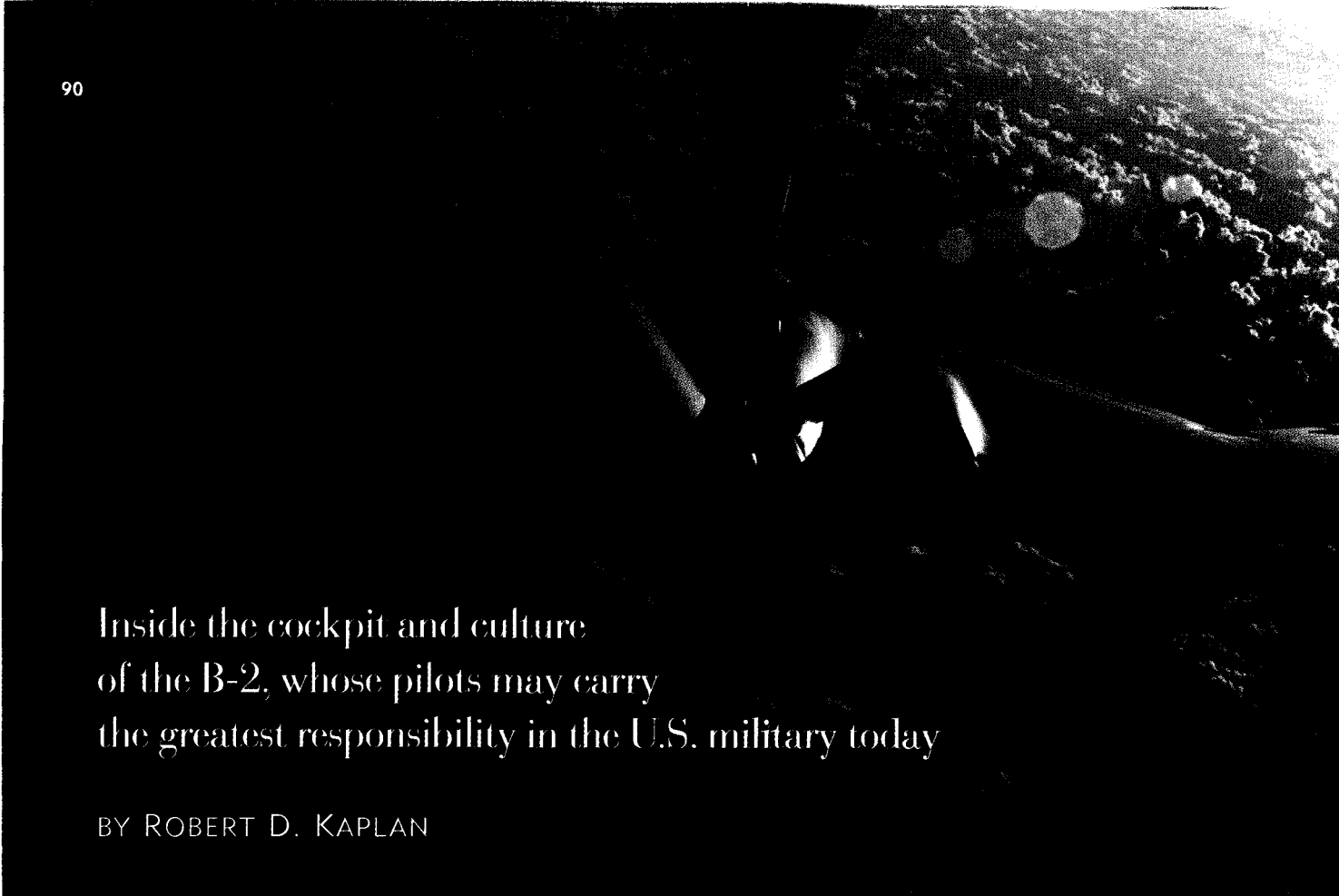
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Inside the cockpit and culture
of the B-2, whose pilots may carry
the greatest responsibility in the U.S. military today

BY ROBERT D. KAPLAN

The Plane That

In June of last year, I went to Andersen Air Force Base, in Guam, to be embedded with the squadron flying the Air Force's top-of-the-line strategic weapon: the B-2 Spirit, a massive, nuclear-capable stealth bomber that looks like a jagged boomerang and, with a price tag of nearly \$1.2 billion, makes other planes seem cheap. It was my third visit in two years to Guam, an island of growing significance in America's military-deployment strategy. ¶ The occasion for my visit was Valiant Shield, a military exercise—and the largest display of U. S. military power in the Pacific since the Vietnam War—in which several B-2s would be participating. Valiant Shield 2006 featured three »

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U.S. AIR FORCE PHOTO BY MASTER SERGEANT VAL GEMIS

aircraft-carrier strike groups, with all of their attendant destroyers, cruisers, frigates, submarines, and aircraft—290 aircraft in all, including B-2s, Marine F-18Cs, Navy F/A-18Es, and Air Force F-15Es. Never mind the official rhetoric—the point of this show of force was to impress adversaries like North Korea and competitors like China. (China had been invited to send a military delegation; the day before I arrived, Chinese officials were inspecting the bombers from the outside.)

Andersen Air Force Base has long had a squadron of heavy bombers, deployed there to be close to Taiwan and the Korean Peninsula. On one of my previous visits to the base, in the autumn of 2004, I'd spent time with B-52 pilots from Barksdale Air Force Base, near Shreveport, Louisiana. They were young, happy-go-lucky, uncomplicated. I was profoundly curious about the B-2 pilots. For a host of reasons, they had to be different.

A B-2 Spirit costs roughly as much as a fast-attack nuclear submarine or a guided-missile destroyer. But whereas a Los Angeles-class submarine requires a crew of 130 and an Arleigh Burke-class destroyer a crew of 320, the B-2 has a crew of just two: a pilot and a mission commander. There are only 21 B-2s in the Air Force. Nobody else in the U.S. military is entrusted with as much

500-pound bombs, and then dropping cluster bombs on nearby cave entrances. This was in early 2002, during Operation Anaconda, and he was flying a B-52 Stratofortress—or BUFF (“Big Ugly Fat Fucker”), as pilots call that hall-of-fame bomber, which made its debut in Vietnam.

Nuke Tibbets and Genghis Price were both inspired to join the Air Force by their Army dads. That's right: Tibbets's unfamous father, not his famous grandfather, had the most influence on his career.

“My grandfather was the ultimate warrior,” Tibbets told me in a mild southern accent that's been fading during his years away from Alabama. “He was a gruff man of few words, whose real historic accomplishment was the B-29 unit he had organized and trained, which ended World War II. The fact that he personally flew the plane that dropped the first atomic bomb reflected his belief that the ultimate warrior is always in the front line. But it was a detail compared to his organizational accomplishment.

“For my grandfather, the mission was everything, which meant his family suffered. He divorced my grandmother and so wasn't around a lot when my dad was growing up. My dad had terrible eyesight and so couldn't be a pilot. He became a pharmacist in civilian life and rose to become a colonel in the Army Reserve, commanding a

Would Bomb Iran

responsibility, in terms of sheer dollars, as these bomber pilots are. If a single B-2 were to go down, even in training, it would be a banner-headline story.

So who are these guys?

The pilots I was embedded with were from the 393rd Bomb Squadron, out of Whiteman Air Force Base, near Kansas City, and they were in Guam on a four-month rotation. The 393rd is the squadron whose planes dropped the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In fact, the current commander is the grandson of Colonel Paul W. Tibbets Jr., the pilot who flew the Hiroshima mission in 1945. Lieutenant Colonel Paul W. “Nuke” Tibbets IV grew up in Montgomery, Alabama, and graduated from the Air Force Academy. He was one of several B-2 pilots whose quarters I shared.

Another of the B-2 pilots I roomed with, also an academy graduate, was Captain Jim “Genghis” Price, from Mesquite, Nevada. Tibbets had gotten his call sign because of his grandfather; Price earned his by destroying a line of suspect buildings in Afghanistan with a “stick” of 28

deployable MASH-like hospital unit. But my father gently encouraged me toward the Air Force. Good on him that he never forced it on me.

“Once I was in the Air Force, my grandfather rolled into my life and influenced me to be a bomber pilot. In his day, my grandfather wanted to fly bombers, as they were taking the fight to the enemy, while pursuit aircraft were supporting that effort.”

For Price, the path was simpler. His father was an Army sergeant at Fort Carson, Colorado—close to the Air Force Academy—and all Genghis ever wanted to do was fly jets in combat. “It's a sappy story, but it's true,” he told me in a permanently eager, cheerful voice. “In high school, I played sports, joined all the clubs, ticked off all the activities that would just help me get into the academy.”

Genghis is a practicing Mormon who has served on religious missions to Latin America. *Macho* isn't a word one would associate with him, or with Nuke. Instead, they exude a humble, introspective star quality. When I asked Nuke what attributes he and others look for when selecting members of the squadron, he said, “People who are

team players to such an extent that they are self-starters, and who never want to be noticed or recognized.”

Nuke and Genghis are both of average height, with taut bodies—Price weighs only 126 pounds—and tense expressions. Their physiques match their quiet, precise personalities. The BUFF pilots I’d met were boisterous, hard-charging types; the B-2 pilots were older and calmer, with patience forged by—to use one example—29-hour hauls from Whiteman to Kosovo. These were continuous flights, with two aerial refuelings before the planes even entered the war zone. Nuke and Genghis didn’t have nine Gs available to them to avoid enemy fire. They depended on getting into and out of a battle space unseen.

No plane is invisible to radar. The trick is to reduce an aircraft’s “signature” so that you can “get iron past” a screen of overlapping surface-to-air missile sites. A B-2 is able to penetrate such screens because its boomerang shape gives it a severely reduced signature. It can drop as much ordnance as an entire squadron of fighter

And B-2 pilots, in particular, have deeply internalized remnants of the Cold War sensibility. Being with them gave me a palpable sense of the terrifyingly complex struggles that may lie ahead. The squadron’s group commander of operations, Colonel Robert “Wheels” Wheeler, summed it up this way: “How do you take out a chemical-biological site of a rogue nation with surety, without inadvertently killing thousands of innocent civilians downwind? Well, the best way to avoid collateral damage would be to obliterate the site in place, with a weapon that either buries the site or burns it completely.”

If we have learned anything since the Berlin Wall fell, it is that nothing can be ruled out. When the B-2 was developed, in the 1980s, part of the thinking was that the pressure to counteract such a stealthy and powerful nuclear bomber would lure the Soviets into further wrecking their economy. Few expected that the plane would be anything more than a theoretical asset, especially after the Cold War ended. Then came the war in Kosovo.

“The B-2 makes a statement. And that statement is, ‘WE MEAN BUSINESS.’”

jets, directing bombs to their targets with GPS tail kits. All of this requires meticulous planning—the crux of a B-2’s mission.

I saw no nude pinups on the B-2 pilots’ walls or computer screens; rather, I saw photos of wives and kids, and I heard many references to community service and church. The pilots rarely cussed, unlike almost everyone else I’ve met in front-line military units. And they were less transient: A B-2 pilot can spend five years stationed at Whiteman, whereas other combat Air Force pilots bounce around the country and the world; until recently, regular Air Force pilots changed locations every two years. The B-2 pilots’ lifestyle helps keep families together.

Although the Air Force is run by aggressive fighter jocks, the B-2 men are, in a deeper sense, the ultimate Air Force pilots. A comparison with naval aviators helps illuminate their mind-set. Navy pilots have a reputation for being screaming-off-the-carrier-deck daredevils; alone in the ocean, without issues like noise restrictions to worry about, they have fewer rules. Naval aviation is about what you can do with an aircraft; Air Force aviation is about what you can’t do. Begotten by the U.S. military in 1947, the Air Force had its character molded by the Cold War’s Strategic Air Command, the core of our nuclear-delivery system. Because of their awesome strategic responsibilities, Air Force pilots are more by-the-book, more operationally conservative, than their Navy counterparts.

The 1999 conflict represented a breakthrough for the Air Force: Rather than a multiplane carpet-bombing strategy, we deployed just a few B-2s, each one hitting multiple targets with the superaccuracy of a fighter jet. Suddenly, aerial warfare was no longer about how many planes were needed to take out a big target, but about how many targets could be taken out with a single plane. The conflict in Kosovo also demonstrated that technology could permit the waging of limited wars. The B-2 allowed President Bill Clinton, who had little appetite for incurring casualties in a humanitarian intervention, to launch strikes with minimal risk to the pilots.

The B-2 has subsequently been used in Afghanistan and Iraq, where, as Colonel Wheeler noted, “The B-2 makes a statement. And that statement is, ‘We mean business!’” He banged his fist on the table. Wheeler is the classic intense Air Force intellectual. He has degrees in both engineering and strategic studies and is a veteran of three wars and a diplomatic posting in Europe. His insights came in hyperactive bursts between sips from a quart-sized plastic coffee mug.

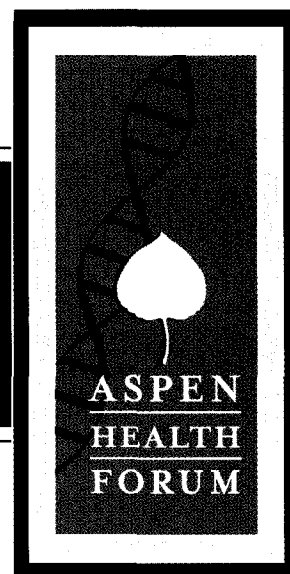
“The deterrence effect of this airplane may be as important as its destructive capability,” he went on. “Any adversary knows that the B-2 can enter relatively unseen with the power and accuracy to destroy. Merely by having the B-2, we can better influence the decision-making process in rogue nations and encourage any other countries to

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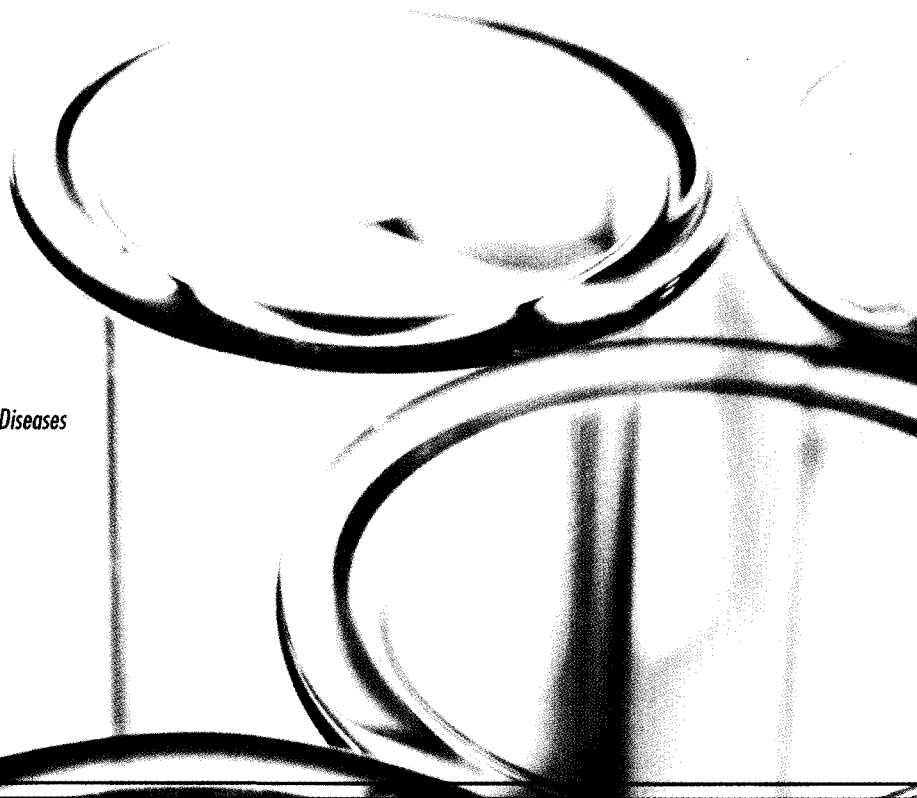
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perhaps go another route in their national defense. The stealth bomber is a diplomatic instrument as much as it is a military instrument." Wheeler didn't say this explicitly, but for *rogue nations*, you should read "Iran and North Korea"; for *other countries* read "China and a resurgent, nationalistic Russia."

As countries like Iran and North Korea put more and more of their critical facilities deep underground, in places that cruise missiles launched from such offshore platforms as submarines lack the kinetic energy to penetrate, the B-2's ability to drop heavier bombs becomes ever more important. If the United States ever attacks Iran, expect to be reading a lot about the B-2. And if we never do, the B-2 will have been a hidden hand behind the muscular diplomacy that made an attack unnecessary.

Among soldiers and marines, there exists a brotherhood of warriors. But with sailors and airmen, the relationship is triangulated by technology—by an emotional bond to this class of ship or to that type of aircraft. The phenomenon is especially pronounced with the B-2.

Take Michael "Bo" Baumeister, of Thousand Oaks, California, who retired as a chief master sergeant after 26 years in the Air Force and now works at Whiteman as a civilian for the Department of Defense, or "DOD," as he habitually calls it. Bo, a maintenance specialist for the B-2, is your typical good old boy, with a ball cap and country accent; he chews Skoal and hunts deer and pigs. "Why did you go to work for the government, rather than for a private contractor, where you could make real money?" I asked him. "I couldn't see leaving her," Bo replied, referring to the B-2. "And DOD offered me the chance to stay with the plane."

He explained further: "It's a pride thing. We're the B-2. We not only kick down your door, we go in and out of your country without you even knowing it. We take out your head of state, your nuke and chem-bio plants, your SAM [surface-to-air missile] sites. Follow us. We clear the path," we say to the other aerial platforms."

I understood Bo's poignant, if over-the-top, infatuation with the plane. Indeed, a B-2 is endlessly fascinating merely to look at. The official Air Force description has it right: The B-2 is not so much a plane as a "flying wing," a jagged gray-black wedge with a small bubble rising out of its center, which is where the pilot and mission commander sit. Seen head-on, the bubble, with its dark windshield, looks like nothing so much as Darth Vader's mask. The ever-so-slightly-turned-down-beak design of the plane's front tip heightens the sinister effect. As you walk around the nose, the swept-back angle of the wings makes them disappear, and the plane seems to shrink in size, bringing to mind a small bat. But once you reach the back of the plane, the size of the wings becomes apparent,

and you realize just how big the plane is. Its wingspan is 172 feet—greater than the distance covered by Orville Wright during his first flight at Kitty Hawk.

Look for another moment, and something else becomes obvious: All the things that normally protrude vertically from an airplane's wings—the fuselage, the engines, the tail, all the screws, rivets, tubes, and antennae—are part of the wings themselves. The four engines are snugly implanted on top of the wings, so that the plane becomes loud only when it's past you; it is quiet when it's approaching. The doors for the undercarriage and the bomb bays have razor-sharp edges that are sucked shut by hydraulic pressure, rendering the plane's exterior seamlessly smooth—no bends or ridges, however tiny; no angles that radar can bounce off. An electric current runs from one end of the plane to the other. This forces radar that hits the plane to skim across the wings rather than bounce off and send a signal. A whole section of the plane's maintenance crew is dedicated to the plane's "skin care."

One clear, sunny day in Guam, I became Spirit No. 374—the 374th person to fly in a B-2 Spirit since Northrop Grumman rolled it out of the hangar, in 1989. More people have been in space. Most of the B-2s are named after states. The plane I flew in was the *Spirit of Georgia*. The pilot was Major Justin "Mulligan" Amann, a graduate of Purdue University's Air Force ROTC program. The mission commander stayed on the ground to make room for me. Inside the cockpit was the mean smell of metal. With the door closed, there was just enough room for a fold-out cot, on which the crew could take turns resting during long flights.

I attached the buckles of my life-support harness to the ejection seat and connected the oxygen and communications gear to my helmet and face mask. Amann was already busy with the two laptops he'd brought on board to supplement the plane's computer system, which dates from the 1980s.

The B-2 is less about flying than about weapons programming and coordinating with other air and sea platforms. Adjustments to the rudders, elevons, and tail flap are made continuously by computers; the pilot doesn't have to worry about these tasks. However, coordinating with naval platforms can pose a challenge, because the Navy and the Air Force use different technological systems; as one pilot told me, harmonizing them is like merging Apple and Microsoft.

The maintenance crew had nicknamed our plane "The Dark Angel." Our call sign was "Death 62." The B-2 that would be flying alongside us was "Death 72." Violence is something no one in the combat Air Force apologizes for. The elite units of the military are about going to war, or "being able to play," as the troops put it. Senior Master Sergeant Kelly Costa, one of the maintenance men, told me that the most exhilarating moments of his

professional life occurred when he was helping to load bombs onto B-2s before the “heavies” left for Kosovo and later Afghanistan.

The flight itself, as I had expected, was not a thrill—nothing like a ride in a fighter jet. We rose and turned at degrees no more dramatic than those of a commercial airliner. After we reached 10,000 feet, Amann put the plane on autopilot. It continued to climb. We took off our oxygen masks, and he immediately got busy programming two missiles and 64 separate 500-pound munitions, which we dropped over Saipan—virtually, of course. I saw exactly what I would have seen had those bombs actually been released: hexagons, each representing an individual bomb, disappearing in twos from the computer screen. Had any of the bombs been nuclear warheads, the screen display would have been the same, but the weapons would have been a different shape.

The sky was near perfect. From 32,000 feet, the bands of cumulus clouds below us looked like occasional imperfections in the glazed surface of the Philippine Sea. Sunlight penetrated the water such that Saipan and Tinian appeared to be back-lit. Several times we flew over the old B-29 runways on Tinian, from which Colonel Paul Tibbets Jr. had flown the *Enola Gay* to bomb Hiroshima. At one point we unlocked the autopilot, and I flew the plane for 10 minutes. It was similar to sailing on instruments—a matter of making adjustments so that a vertical line stayed on, or close to, a dot on the screen. It struck me that the art of flying was being lost.

Behind this ease of flight lay an entire world: the maintainers. Deploying the four B-2s from Whiteman to Andersen had taken a maintenance crew of 155, as well as 130 pieces of rolling stock—jammers, light carts, generators. Then there were the huge pallets of equipment, including the containers holding the 170 different chemicals used by the B-2, each of which requires customized climate-controlled conditions and must be disposed of according to strict regulations. The maintainers worked 12-hour shifts, in several buildings and hangars. To get the maintenance crew and equipment to Guam had taken one C-17 Globemaster and four C-5 Galaxies, transport planes so monstrous they dwarf the old standby C-130 Hercules.

Contemplating all of this led me to an unsettling realization: In most cases, it makes little sense to put assets that require so much ground support on forward bases. Because Guam is a U.S. territory, we can make a huge investment there without having to worry that we’ll be thrown out. But there’s no point in basing B-2s at sites controlled by other countries if in the midst of a crisis they might deny us permission to use them. Along with our other top-of-the-line aircraft, the B-2s should remain based primarily in the continental United States—which makes increasing the capacity for worldwide air-to-air refueling a key task for the Air Force.

Colonel Wheeler made the point that in future conflicts conventional assets like the B-2 and fast-attack submarines would be used in tandem with Predator drones, Special Forces A-teams, and Marine Corps platoons. Forget the debate about having needed more troops in Iraq after the initial invasion. As true as that might be, our military’s primary focus in the next few decades will not be on massive troop levels; it will be on hitting specific targets with commando-style ground units that could call in air and sea strikes from platforms that are either untouchable or unseen. For example, during a war with a regional power like Iran, down-and-dirty planes like the A-10 and the AC-130, which typically provide close air support, would be less likely to be used than a high-altitude heavy like the B-2, after Special Operations teams have gone in on the ground for limited periods to identify targets for the planes’ bunker-buster and other high-impact bombs.

Such operations would require an exponential increase in complexity—a greater variety of assets used in quick, symphonic offensives. “We may not be able to mass troops like we used to,” Wheeler observed. “It’s not just a matter of negative publicity from a global media, but of a profusion of competitors that will increasingly have the ability to hit such large formations with weapons of mass destruction. And that will be a chance we won’t want to take.

“Think of bees swarming together in a hive, and then flying off again,” he continued. “That’s the military formation of the 21st century—lots of small joint air-land-sea configurations that combine instantaneously for a big attack and then separate out just as fast.”

That’s why many of the debates taking place today—about conventional versus nuclear weapons, about spending money on this aircraft versus that one—are simply beside the point. The issue is no longer what an A-team, or a submarine, or a Predator, or a B-2 bomber can do on its own; it’s how these assets can be used in combination to leverage one another.

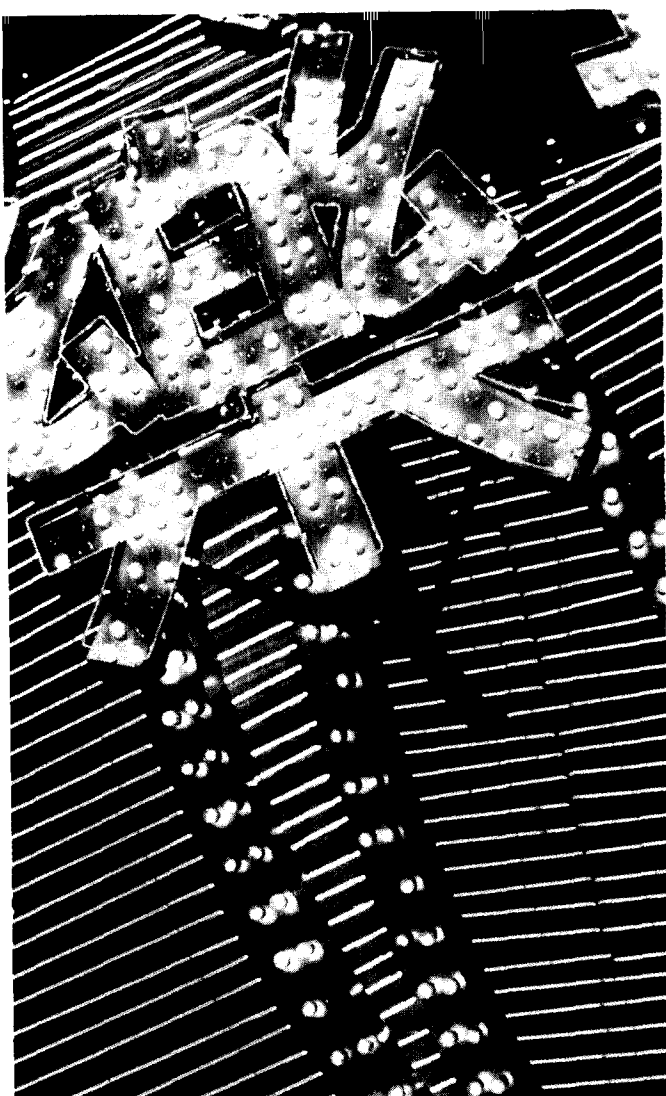
But that raises a larger issue: If the B-2 is necessary, for both our force structure and our negotiating credibility, as Colonel Wheeler believes it is, then its cost of more than \$1 billion per plane is a truly depressing indicator of the price of empire. “Look at the rate of return al-Qaeda got on 9/11,” one former civilian defense official told me. “For an investment of just a few hundred thousand dollars, they forced us to spend billions.” In other words, as necessary as the B-2 might be, what’s its rate of return—20 percent, perhaps? “I’m not saying that we require a rate of return like al-Qaeda gets,” this former official went on, “but we’ll need to narrow the difference if we’re going to remain a great power.” ▀

Robert D. Kaplan, a national correspondent for *The Atlantic*, is the Class of 1960 Distinguished Visiting Professor in National Security at the U.S. Naval Academy. This article is drawn from his book *Hog Pilots, Blue Water Grunts: The American Military in the Air, at Sea, and on the Ground*, published this month by Random House.



MACAU'S BIG

Today's boom times in China are interesting in their own right, as economic booms always are. By chance and by design, I have lived in the middle of several of them: the Texas oil boom of the mid-1970s, Japan's all-around boom of the late '80s, and the Seattle and Bay Area Internet bubble of the late '90s. Inside the boom zone, people don't spend much time thinking about how the good times began, or asking how long the boom can last. Everyone, everywhere, takes their own prosperity as a sign of cleverness, wise planning, and hard work. ¶ From outside, the questions concern the boom's effects—on culture, on values, on old establishments and traditions. Such questions about China's boom »



Even as foreign investors pour billions into ever-glitzier casinos, the tiny peninsula's bid to become the Vegas of the Orient depends on China's larger willingness to embrace transparency and the rule of law.

BY JAMES FALLOWS

GAMBLE

are unusually compelling, simply because of the country's scale. What will its growth mean for the global environment? For jobs and prices outside of China? For the military balance of power and the ideological contest of ideas?

Right now the very most booming part of generally booming China raises questions like these in a peculiar and intriguing form. This part is the tiny peninsula of Macau—as it spells its name, versus Macao in American usage. Geographically, it is one-sixth the size of the District of Columbia, and it has a population of half a million. It officially became Chinese territory only in 1999, after centuries of colonial control by Portugal. Like its neighbor Hong Kong, which was transferred from British to Chinese control in 1997, Macau is a “special administrative region” of China, meaning it is supposed to run by its own laws and customs for at least 50 years after the handover.

While China's overall economy has grown about 10 percent per year since the 1980s, Macau's has recently

been growing by 20. While Shanghai, Beijing, and other big cities are dotted with construction cranes, Macau appears to be made of them. Early this year, on a tour of Macau's Cotai Strip, where a version of the Las Vegas Strip is being created, I counted more than 200 working cranes before I lost track. While the rest of China is struggling to contain the tensions between the very rich and the very poor, via what the central government calls its “harmonious society” policy, Macau is rushing to make itself more attractive to the very rich—and to anyone else who would like to visit the only part of Chinese territory where casino gambling is legal. (State-run lotteries are the only legal gambling outlet on the mainland.)

Last year Macau finally overtook Las Vegas in gambling revenues: Macau had about \$7 billion, versus \$6.5

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For an author-narrated slideshow of Macau, visit <http://www.theatlantic.com/macau>.

billion for Las Vegas. As we will see, this statistical achievement is less significant than it sounds. But news outlets naturally presented it to Americans as more evidence of China's incomprehensible scale and its unstoppable rise—plus, on the bright side, as another example of the riches open to Western companies (in this case, U.S. casino firms) that can figure out how to get part of the pot-o'-gold Chinese market.

Yes, what is happening in Macau should be of intense interest to casino operators everywhere, and to the financiers and suppliers who thrive off the world's gambling industry, and to those compiling information on how Chinese people use their new wealth. But in repeated visits to Macau, I found it far more interesting than I would have guessed from most of the gambling-boom stories.

It is interesting in a lowbrow way, because of Macau's ineradicable seediness. Look in one direction, and you see a new five-star hotel. Turn 90 degrees, and you see an alley down which Indiana Jones might run, pursued by gangsters, or where Sydney Greenstreet might totter out from a smoky den. But this same small locale is also deeply interesting in highbrow ways. The fate of modern Macau will be determined in part by the same political and ideological struggles that are determining so many other aspects of China's rise. The more China influences businesses and societies elsewhere, the more it comes under pressure to adhere to broadly accepted international standards rather than to its accustomed ways. These standards include such vague-sounding principles as rule of law, transparency, and accountability, which in practice mean: Can you trust a contract? Can you win a lawsuit? Do you know who's really making a decision? Will the decision be made in favor of whoever provides a "red envelope" containing the biggest bribe? How many sets of books should a company be keeping, anyway? How much money laundering is too much, if Macau wants to be internationally respectable?

Our story begins 450 years ago, when the Portuguese established effective control over Macau and began using it as their trading base for markets in China and Japan. By the mid-1800s, this business had been eclipsed by the rise of British banks and trading companies in Hong Kong. The Portuguese government of Macau responded by legalizing gambling and developing what two academic analysts recently called a "sordid" economic structure—a "mixture of gambling, opium, and coolies trade, together with prostitution, crime and contraband." The businesses reinforced each other, since peasants who fell into debt at the gambling tables or in the opium dens could be turned into coolies or indentured seamen until they worked off what they owed.

Through the world wars of the 20th century and the rise of the Communists on the Chinese mainland, the Portuguese government oversaw Macau's casinos and its vice-

based economy. The prelude to Macau's modern era began in 1962, when Stanley Ho, a 41-year-old entrepreneur from Hong Kong with a Chinese father and a Portuguese mother, paid Portugal about half a million U.S. dollars to take over monopoly rights to run all casinos in Macau. Soon he also dominated the helicopter and ferry businesses that brought customers from Hong Kong, the biggest department store, the racetrack, and so on. He held a one-third share in the airport and a one-seventh share in Air Macau. Perhaps it's not surprising to hear that now, in his mid-80s, Ho is the richest man in Macau and one of the richest in all of China, with assets estimated at \$7 billion. Or that he is debonair and sharply dressed, renowned for his skill at the tango and other ballroom dances, or that he has had, by most reports, four wives and 17 children. His flagship operation has been the Casino Lisboa—rendered in Chinese as Pujing, or "capital of Portugal"—which has a 1950s-Las Vegas look. (Earlier this year, he opened the glitzier, bigger Grand Lisboa Casino.) He is referred to in Macau as "Dr. Stanley Ho," including on the avenue of that name running through the middle of the town and, for a while, on his apparently now-defunct online gambling site, DrHo.com.

Stanley Ho has not been charged with any crime but is typically described (outside his home territory) as being "associated with" or "suspected of ties to" criminal gangs from Macau and surrounding areas. The New Jersey Casino Control Commission is now considering whether one of its licensees, MGM Mirage, can enter a partnership with one of Ho's daughters, Pansy Ho. The decision will turn on whether Pansy Ho, whose reputation is otherwise positive, can prove that she is wholly independent of her father's influence. (The Nevada Gaming Commission and Mississippi Gaming Commission have already considered the same question and given Pansy Ho their OK.)

By all accounts, the Macau of Stanley Ho's heyday was loose, easy, and lightly regulated. British Hong Kong attracted business through rule-of-law government and investments in infrastructure and education. Portuguese Macau enticed visitors. During the mid-1980s, my family visited Hong Kong. One day while I stayed there for meetings, my wife took our two school-aged sons to Macau by ferry for a day trip. She returned, ashen; they were wide-eyed after their brief visit to Gomorrah. In those days, according to a recent *Time* magazine report on the "sleepy, sleazy" city, "its architecturally charming but rundown streets were lined with hookers and occasionally reverberated with gunfire and car bombings from triad gang battles."

It's less violent now, but the old Macau is with us still. One hotel where my wife and I stayed this year doubled as a brothel featuring Russian women. On my latest visit, I stayed in Ho's original Hotel Lisboa, where the young women patrolling the corridors and popping into elevators to greet unaccompanied men were Chinese. To be fair, the

city also has beautiful gardens, an informative city-history museum, a good collection of local art, elegant colonial buildings, abundant Portuguese-Chinese *estabelecimento comidas* for informal outdoor dining, and many other elements of the tropical good life. A 1,000-foot tower offers visitors a sweeping panorama of the Pearl River Delta. Sleaziness and all, it's an interesting place.

The next big change for Macau began in 1999, with the handover to China and the selection by the Chinese government of Edmund Ho (no relation to Stanley) as Macau's chief executive. This Ho was raised in Macau, educated in Canada, and worked in the United States and elsewhere before returning home, in 1983, when he was in his late 20s. He participated in the negotiations for Macau's handover to China. His selection, at age 44, was seen as a significant signal that the Chinese authorities were interested in good government.

Edmund Ho quickly went to work as a reformer. "The Mafia-style murders just ceased," says William Overholt of the Rand Corporation, who lived in Hong Kong at the time. "Suddenly there was serious planning for economic

Stanley's son. (Australian officials scrutinized his independence from his father's influence, as American officials have done with Pansy Ho, before they approved the partnership.) Those are the players. Here is the play—that is, the many interlocking struggles in Macau that together create its larger political meaning.

If you were a financial analyst, as many, many of the people I've interviewed on this subject are, you would be interested mainly in comparing the six companies' market strategies. For instance: Galaxy wants to be seen as the most authentically Chinese and is emphasizing the profitable if inelegant "grind" market.

(A note here on three terms: *gaming*, *win*, and *grind*. You can spot people who work in the gambling industry, because they always call their business "gaming." They use *gambling* only in pejorative contexts, as in "problem gambling." *Win* is the industry's term for casino profit. Financial reports from the big casino companies list "win per table," which means the house's daily take from a baccarat or roulette table. *Grind* is a business term for low-stakes,

"The noise, the excitement—it's all just right."

development, serious investment in infrastructure, serious interest in sound business regulation." Edmund Ho apparently believed in good government, and his sponsors in Beijing thought Macau would do best if it were seriously cleaned up. In 2002, he ushered in Macau's modern age by ending Stanley Ho's monopoly and opening the casino business to foreign competitors. He acted as if he understood that the best chance to clean up the casinos would be to bring in companies that answered to laws and regulations outside Macau. At first, the rules authorized three casino operators, counting Stanley Ho (through his SJM, for Sociedade de Jogos de Macau, or "Macau Gaming Society"). Now the rules allow six.

In 2004, the first big foreign casino opened, the Sands Macao, owned by Sheldon Adelson's Las Vegas Sands company. It was an instant success, creating profits so fast that it repaid all its capital costs in less than a year. In 2006, Steve Wynn opened the Wynn Macau, with rooms much bigger, fancier, and costlier than the norm for Macau. The other competitors are Galaxy, a company founded by Hong Kong construction tycoons and based in Macau, and two foreign-based firms affiliated with Stanley Ho's children: MGM Mirage, in a 50-50 partnership with Pansy Ho, and Melco PBL, a partnership between the Packer publishing empire of Australia and Lawrence Ho,

high-volume customers—in American terms, busloads of quarter-slot players headed to Atlantic City. I am looking at a report from a major U.S. bank with a section headed: "The Grind Market: Brighter Prospects.")

Galaxy's new StarWorld is set slightly askew to the main boulevard that runs in front of it. This is one signal that it's through-and-through Chinese. "Westerners look at it and say, 'It's crooked!'" Peter Caveny, head of investor relations for Galaxy, told me. "The instant Chinese look at it they think, 'Feng shui.'" The casino has an apparently limitless supply of 6-foot-tall female Chinese models who stand just inside the front door. "People come in, they see the girls, they take a picture—and go upstairs and gamble," Caveny said. "The noise, the excitement—it's all just right."

The Wynn properties take the opposite approach: classiness, modern Vegas variety. "Every one of the songs was chosen personally by Mr. Wynn," a Wynn official named Reddy Leong told me as we watched "Performance Lake" outside the hotel, which sends off fireballs and jets of water in time with music ranging from "Luck Be a Lady" to "Thus Spoke Zarathustra." The suites have high-thread-count linens, granite-appointed bathrooms bigger than my apartment in Shanghai, massage rooms with professional massage tables.

Stanley Ho's SJM is opening the most new casinos and attractions—one that looks like a temple of Babylon, one like a Tang-era Chinese fortress, one like a volcano blended with a Tibetan palace, one like a Roman amphitheater. Its biggest casino, the Grand Lisboa, is so garish I do not know where a description would begin. (Perhaps with the casino dome itself, sort of like a billion-karat faceted diamond in pink and gold, surrounded by dozens of gold-colored St. Louis-style arches?) The company will also soon open a "Prague Harbour View" hotel, presumably inspired by Prague's famous harbour.

The other competitors have varying strategies. Financial analysts are basically high on all six of the licensed casino companies.

If you were a gaming-industry insider, you would be interested in Macau mainly as the latest arena for the primeval struggle between Sheldon Adelson and Steve Wynn. In Las Vegas, the two are seen as opposite in all ways. Adelson, in his mid-70s, is still brash and impolite, a relative newcomer to the business (he first made money with trade shows) who transformed the Las Vegas economy through his "MICE" strategy (Adelson's term for bringing customers to Las Vegas not just for gambling but for "Meetings, Incentive, Convention, and Exhibition"). Thanks largely to him, Las Vegas has changed from a weekend destination to one where hotels are busy all week long. "I can tell you that when Sheldon Adelson decided to build the [enormous] Las Vegas Venetian and cater to conventioners, many people thought he was crazy," Andrew Zarnett, a managing director at Deutsche Bank, said at G2E-Asia, the Global Gaming Expo, held this summer in Macau. "But he was daring, he had a view, and he was right."

Unlike Adelson, who shaped Las Vegas through mass marketing, Steve Wynn, now in his mid-60s, shaped it through high-end innovations. At industry meetings, I listened to financiers and casino veterans contrast Wynn's suaveness and perfectionism with Adelson's bluntness and commoditization. I came away thinking that Wynn's demeanor could have been the model for Wayne Newton's performance in National Lampoon's *Vegas Vacation*. "Steve Wynn was equally daring in going upscale, offering luxury and high-end restaurants, in the faith that the customer will pay," said Zarnett.

The broadening of Las Vegas's economic base is why Macau has in no sense overtaken it. Casino earnings make up nearly all of Macau's tourist-related revenue, while they're barely 40 percent of the Las Vegas Strip. The rest comes from conventions, shows, high-end dining, and fancy malls. Because of all these attractions, the average visitor to Las Vegas stays for nearly four days. The norm in Macau is still the casino-centric day trip. That's one reason Las Vegas has 130,000 hotel rooms, versus 13,000 for Macau. In size, glitziness, and overall excitement, Macau feels much more like Atlantic City—really,

like an especially large concentration of Indian casinos in California—than Las Vegas. The current growth surge in Macau is meant to correct these weaknesses.

Adelson's Sands Macao is the town's biggest casino, and his 3,000-room Venetian Macao, scheduled to open by this month, will be the city's biggest hotel (plus casino and convention center). On my first visit to the Sands, in January, I looked from an inner balcony onto a gambling floor that, I was told, contained 20,000 customers, virtually all of whom appeared to be Chinese. The Wynn Macau looks different from anything around it: The city is aglare in blinking neon, but the only ornamentation on his hotel is a large cursive signature of his last name. The casino itself is understated, along the lines of a gentlemen's club. Hotel rooms at the Wynn are more expensive than at any major competitor, but the hotel has an 85 percent occupancy rate, versus 70 percent for Macau as a whole. In the battle for Macau, both men have won.

If you were an economist, you might be interested in Macau's test of the hypothesis that everyone who gets into the casino business wins, not just the industry's Men of Vision, like Adelson and Wynn. This is "win" in the casino sense, of course—that is, they end up with the money the customers lose.

The gambling business is unusual because of what analysts call its "supply driven" nature: The more places and ways there are to bet money, the more money people will bet. In many businesses, success for a new competitor means a defeat for those already there. In minor ways, this appears to be true even in Macau. Stanley Ho does not enjoy the monopoly he did a decade ago; as casinos add new tables, the win per table overall goes down. Some financiers worry that in the short term Macau may be adding too many gambling sites too fast.

But in the largest sense, the pie of gambling revenue grows and grows, so there's more for all. Macau's gambling win is bigger than that of Las Vegas—and Las Vegas is now adding capacity faster than it ever has before. (Macau also imposes a tax of up to 40 percent on casino earnings, far higher than in most U.S. states.) Fifty years ago, no U.S. state had a lottery; now, 42 states do. "People would always ask, 'Will Atlantic City hurt Vegas?'" Zarnett, of Deutsche Bank, said to me. "What about Indian gaming? Or the riverboats? They all came, and Las Vegas continued to grow. Macau won't hurt. Nothing hurts. New supply is always absorbed."

Some animals, given all the food they want, will eat practically until they burst; others eat only until they reach a certain size. I asked I. Nelson Rose, a professor at Whittier Law School who has written many books about the industry, whether any society offered evidence that at some point people would have spent "enough" on gambling. He said that specific areas, including Macau, could become over-casinoed, but that a sustained worldwide

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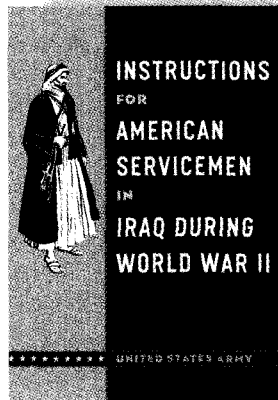
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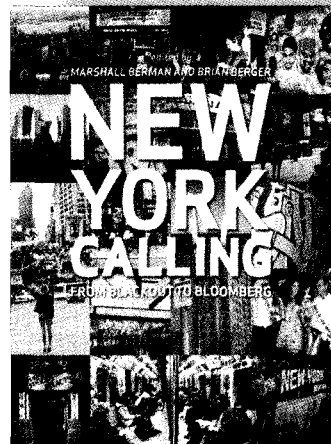
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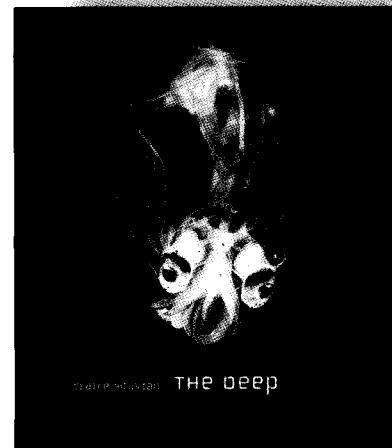
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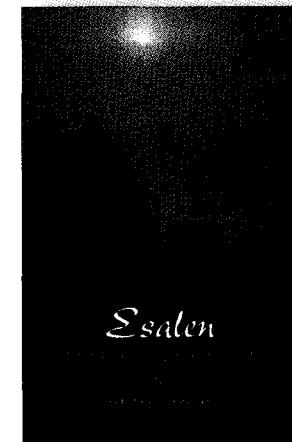
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surge in demand for gambling seems to be under way. And even if there is a theoretical limit, for now the potential for Asia is limitless. The 300 million people of the United States spend about \$50 billion a year on gambling. Frank Fahrenkopf, head of the American Gaming Association, points out that within a five-hour flight of Macau live more than 3 billion people, who together now spend only about \$12 billion. Supply will bring demand.

If you were a gambling-equipment supplier, you would be interested in knowing whether Macau's casinos were going to make the "tables to slots" shift anytime soon. For anyone familiar with an American casino, the first glance inside the Grand Lisboa or even the Sands Macao is startling. To begin with, it's (relatively) quiet. China in general is as noisy as American casinos, but Chinese casinos are surprisingly hushed. Perhaps that's because there's practically no alcohol; attendants walk around with trays of free drinks, but the drinks are water, tea, milk, fruit juice. (The Chinese theory is that placing bets requires full concentration, and gamblers don't want to dull their senses or skills.) But mainly it's quiet because there are practically no slot machines to whoop-whoop and clunk out coins when someone wins. In Las Vegas, slots account for roughly 60 percent of the total casino win; in Macau, roughly 5 percent. Catherine Burns, vice president of marketing for the Bally slot-machine company, pointed out at the G2E conference that the total number of slots in Macau is about the same as at the Mohegan Sun, in Connecticut. What Macau's casinos have instead are "table games": not blackjack, craps, or poker—all of limited interest so far to Chinese gamblers—but roulette, a dice game called *da xiao* ("big-little"), and most of all, baccarat. Felt-covered tables for baccarat occupy most of Macau's gambling space.

Customers will be wedged six-deep around one table, while dealers stand idle at the neighboring two. This pattern arises, I was told, from the widespread belief among Chinese gamblers that there are "hot" and "cold" tables, and much of the skill in gambling involves telling them apart. (The clustering of other gamblers around a table is one clue.) This leads to the question that might interest you if you were an anthropologist—or a potential investor in Macau: Is there a distinctively Chinese attitude toward games of chance?

Nearly all customers in Macau are ethnically Chinese. They come in roughly equal shares from the mainland, Hong Kong, and Chinese communities in Southeast Asia. "Do Chinese like gambling more than other people?" asked Ivan Yiu at the conference in Macau. Yiu, himself Chinese, is the coordinator of addiction services for a group of hospitals in Hong Kong. His answer was yes. I have seen many sociological studies that support that view. Here is one of Yiu's pieces of evidence: In the United States, the overall rate of "pathological gambling" is 1.8 percent; for

Chinese Americans and Chinese immigrants, it is about 3 percent. The variation, Yiu said, involves cultural characteristics and assumptions. Some of these may sound familiar to people who have seen or known problem gamblers of any background: a "lack of probabilistic thinking," a belief that a player's skill can surmount the odds (even in baccarat and roulette, which involve no skill beyond laying down a bet), the "delusion that one can foresee results by intuition and control results by ritual." The main difference, Yiu said, is that in Chinese cultures, a larger proportion of people think this way. One other, more distinctive factor is a traditional belief that money won in gambling is as respectable as money earned any other way. According to Yiu, a gambler who has a good run at the roulette table will be just as esteemed as, say, Warren Buffet, with allowances for difference of scale.

With the concept of respectability, we arrive at political values, regulation, and international law. If you were curious about the broad noneconomic effects of China's economic rise, you would be watching the struggle over Macau's "VIP rooms" as a proxy for larger questions about China's adherence to "universal values."

Stanley Ho's four-decade monopoly on all casino business might seem the strangest part of Macau's economic structure. It was not: That distinction has belonged to the related system of VIP rooms, which has also been the foundation of Macau's gambling economy—and which poses the greatest challenge to Macau's ability to come into sync with international norms.

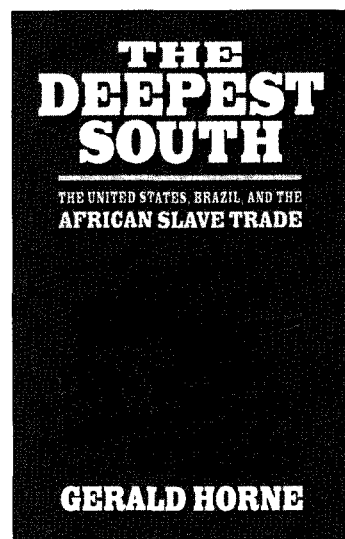
The most recent and authoritative academic study of the topic is "The VIP-Room Contractual System and Macao's Traditional Casino Industry," forthcoming from William Eadington, a prominent economist and director of the Institute for the Study of Gambling at the University of Nevada, Reno, and Wuyi Wang, of the Macau Polytechnic Institute. They write that the system arose from a quirk in Macau's location and logistics. In the 1970s, most of the customers came from Hong Kong by ferry, but there were never enough seats to satisfy demand. Scalpers moved in, buying up ferry tickets at face value and selling them for a profit. Stanley Ho believed this was bad for Macau's casinos and for the ferry, which he also owned, so he proposed a grand compromise: If the scalpers would move out of the ferry terminals, and presumably keep replacements from moving in, he would let them participate in gambling operations in special areas inside his casinos, which could be much more lucrative. Over time, the arrangement evolved into a way to increase the profits of Ho's casinos while subcontracting much of the work of dealing with customers to a group of shady touts.

The touts' tactics varied. Sometimes, according to the professors, they would "befriend" prosperous-looking gamblers who had just gotten off the ferry from Hong



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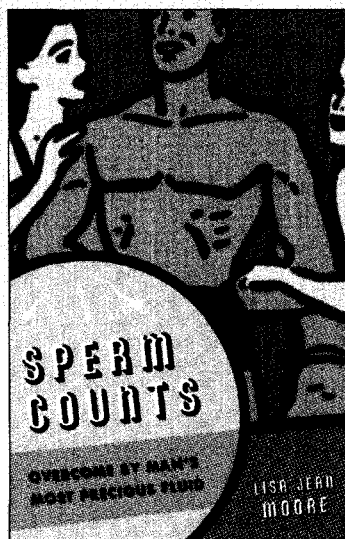
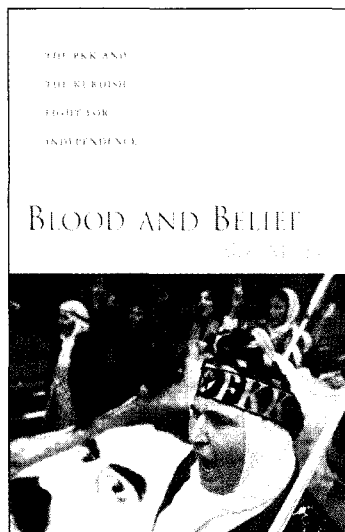
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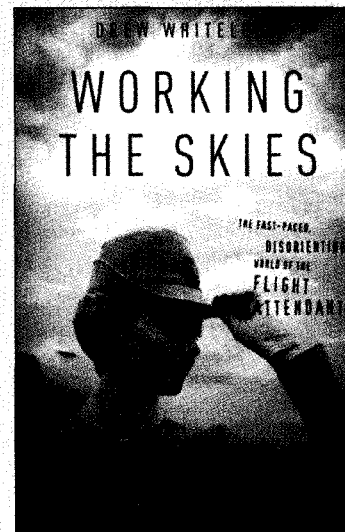
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Kong or had just crossed the Chinese border and lead them to casinos. It is hard to imagine visitors being this naive—"Hey, brother, looking for some action? I've got just the place!" But apparently it worked, and works, well enough to be an important part of the VIP-room business. Or junket organizers would act as travel agents, getting players to Macau and directing them to special rooms in a casino—where VIP-room contractors would extend credit to their customers and take a portion of the win. The players would have their own dealers, their own games, their own supply of food and drink, their own entertainment.

The win-sharing arrangements between touts, VIP-room contractors, and casinos could be quite complex. Sometimes the host casino would simply take a cut of each VIP room's action; sometimes a tout or junket operator would be paid a commission or fee. Often these independent contractors would lend money to gamblers who were running into bad luck and make their profit through the "vig," or interest. Often they would be paid off through a

to Macau. One Western banker with extensive experience in Macau pointed out that the city functions as one big, quasi-official money-laundering site, via the numerous gold dealers' shops on either side of its border with mainland China. Chinese visitors buy gold with RMB from shops on their side of the border, and then sell to dealers on the Macau side for Hong Kong dollars—a "hard" currency that can be converted into U.S. dollars or euros and sent anywhere in the world.

Something similar can go on when wealthy Chinese visit a VIP room. The room's operator lends them money for gambling—often large sums, worth thousands or millions of U.S. dollars. The loan is in Hong Kong dollars, the main betting currency of Macau (its own currency is called the pataca). If the Chinese gambler wins, he now has hard currency. If he loses, he settles the debt back in China, in RMB. A related practice is "doubling down," in which the bets are made in one currency, say Hong Kong dollars, but the players agree to settle them later in another,

Pushed by regulators like the Nevada Gaming Commission, some of the big gambling companies in Macau have been made into public firms.

good governance, transparency, rule of law, and a cleanup of the VIP business.

scheme too convoluted to explain here, which involved something called a "dead chip."

Private gambling of this sort goes on everywhere—what would a Vegas movie be without a private poker game? But in Macau it was, and is, *most* of the gambling economy. Even now, some 65 percent of the money wagered in Macau is bet in VIP rooms. The rooms are not as profitable for the casinos as the grind market at its best. As Eadington and Wang explain, "VIP players may require the provision of lavish hotel rooms and high quality amenities for themselves and their entourages, expensive transportation, considerable pampering by staff, and a great deal of time and attention from senior management." But the sums wagered are so great that no Macau casino can afford not to cater to this market.

The problem with the VIP system is that while it doesn't guarantee corruption, it makes it very convenient. In theory, there's nothing wrong with private gambling areas. In practice, there has been little or no effort to check the backgrounds of the contractors. The rooms are assumed to be convenient sites for money laundering, which works this way:

The Chinese government doesn't allow rich people to easily take their money out of the country, and it allows them to convert only small amounts of renminbi each year. So a factory owner from the Pearl River Delta, or a corrupt public official who has grown wealthy, will head

like U.S. dollars. Exactly how the debts are paid, and just where the touts get their substantial operating capital, is obscure. But the rooms and other Macau-based services are assumed to be a major channel for money flowing illegally out of China—and North Korea.

I was able to see the VIP suites in about half the casinos I visited. In many cases, I was the only non-Chinese person on the premises, so it was hard to make an unobtrusive visit to one of the private rooms. I got into the ones I saw by asking casino management for a press tour. The rooms ranged from one seemingly as clean-cut as, say, a first-class lounge in an overseas airport (the "Paiza Club," at the Sands Macao) to one at a locally owned casino I won't name, where the 20 people crowded around a baccarat table in a small room reacted to my entry as if I were a mother who had blundered into a room of teenage boys looking at skin magazines.

The VIP rooms are not the only cleanup challenge facing Macau. For instance, its banks are under pressure to tighten their rules against money laundering. This summer, the mainland government momentarily panicked Macau by making it harder for people in neighboring Guangdong Province to get visas to visit Macau. (The restrictions are still in place, but the panic has ebbed. Officials in Macau now see the move not as directed against them but as part of a general move to slow down parts of the economy that were growing unsustainably fast.) Still,

the VIP-rooms issue has become central, because of this conundrum: Economically, they are too important for any company to forgo, but legally, they are risky for international companies to accept.

They pose no risk to Stanley Ho's SJM, which is still the largest operator in Macau. A local reform movement would have to go to Cultural Revolution-style extremes to call his licenses into question. Galaxy, also based in Macau, is in a similar position. But Wynn, Sands, and MGM Mirage know that if they're found consorting with shady touts in Macau or laundering money from Guangzhou or Pyongyang (where Stanley Ho has a casino), they could lose their U.S. licenses, which are vastly more valuable. Melco PBL faces a similar risk in Australia. And so it is that America's big gambling companies have been made into tribunes for good governance, transparency, the international rule of law, and a cleanup of the VIP business—mainly under pressure from the Nevada Gaming Commission and its analogues in New Jersey and Mississippi.

"In order to have any effective game, there has to be effective regulatory control," Frank Fahrenkopf said on the opening day of the gaming expo in Macau. "We have to be assured there is no money laundering. The secret to having a successful gaming industry is tough regulatory control." This is not a normal statement from the head of a trade association, but it reflects the American industry's rise toward legitimacy from the days when Bugsy Siegel helped create Las Vegas and Jimmy Hoffa's Teamsters financed its development. The state gaming commissions—which control the all-important licenses for Las Vegas, Atlantic City, and the Gulf Coast casinos of Biloxi—try to ensure these standards are met by requiring thorough checks of the backgrounds and sources of income of everyone who gets near a casino's staff. What they want to see are similar strictures in Macau for anyone operating a VIP room, as well as leakproof systems to prevent money laundering.

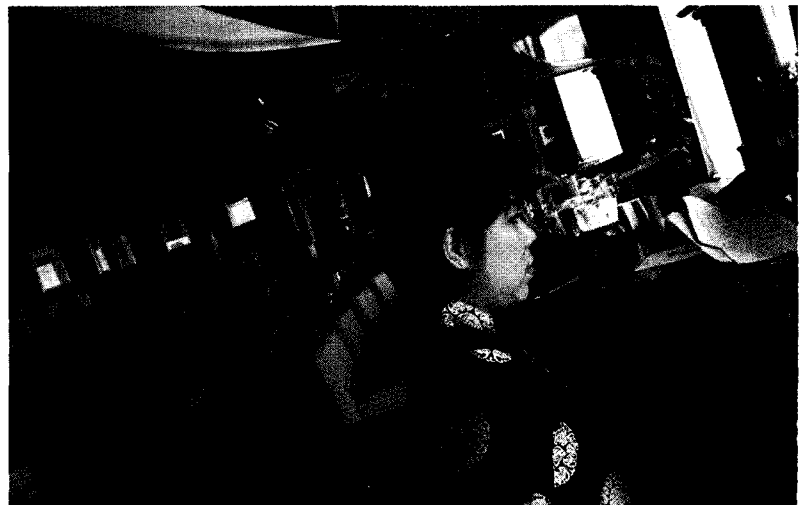
Fahrenkopf pointed out that over the past decade, scandals have affected the American accounting industry, banking, mutual-fund brokers, telecom companies, and many others—but not the gambling business. "This industry is licensed more carefully than any other that exists—well, I don't know about nuclear reactors," I. Nelson Rose of the Whittier Law School told me. "The Nevada application starts by asking you every address where you have *ever* lived. Every cent you have earned. Every gift you have received." This is a standard that no VIP-room tout could hope to pass, he says.

What the gaming commissions don't impose on the industry, its financiers do. The big international combines financing Macau's current expansion, from Goldman Sachs and Merrill Lynch to Deutsche Bank and Citibank, spend much of their due-diligence time vetting the casinos' provisions against money laundering, so as to avoid what one banker called the "franchise risk" of winding

up as the financiers of Chinese criminals, North Korean potentates, or other evildoers with hot cash.

So which side will prevail in the battle of Macau? The shady system that has been the backbone of its economy, and that local companies still rely on? Or the international standards that the Nevada Gaming Commission and the shareholders of the world are forcing on the likes of Wynn, Adelson, and MGM Mirage?

Fahrenkopf says that technology will again come to America's rescue: "We've got capital, but really we've got *expertise* in running a modern gaming business, which they need." Therefore, he told me, Macanese and Chinese officials would cooperate in cleaning up the VIP system. Adam Rosenberg, a managing director and co-head of Goldman Sachs's gaming practice, says that China's interests push in the same direction, toward doing whatever



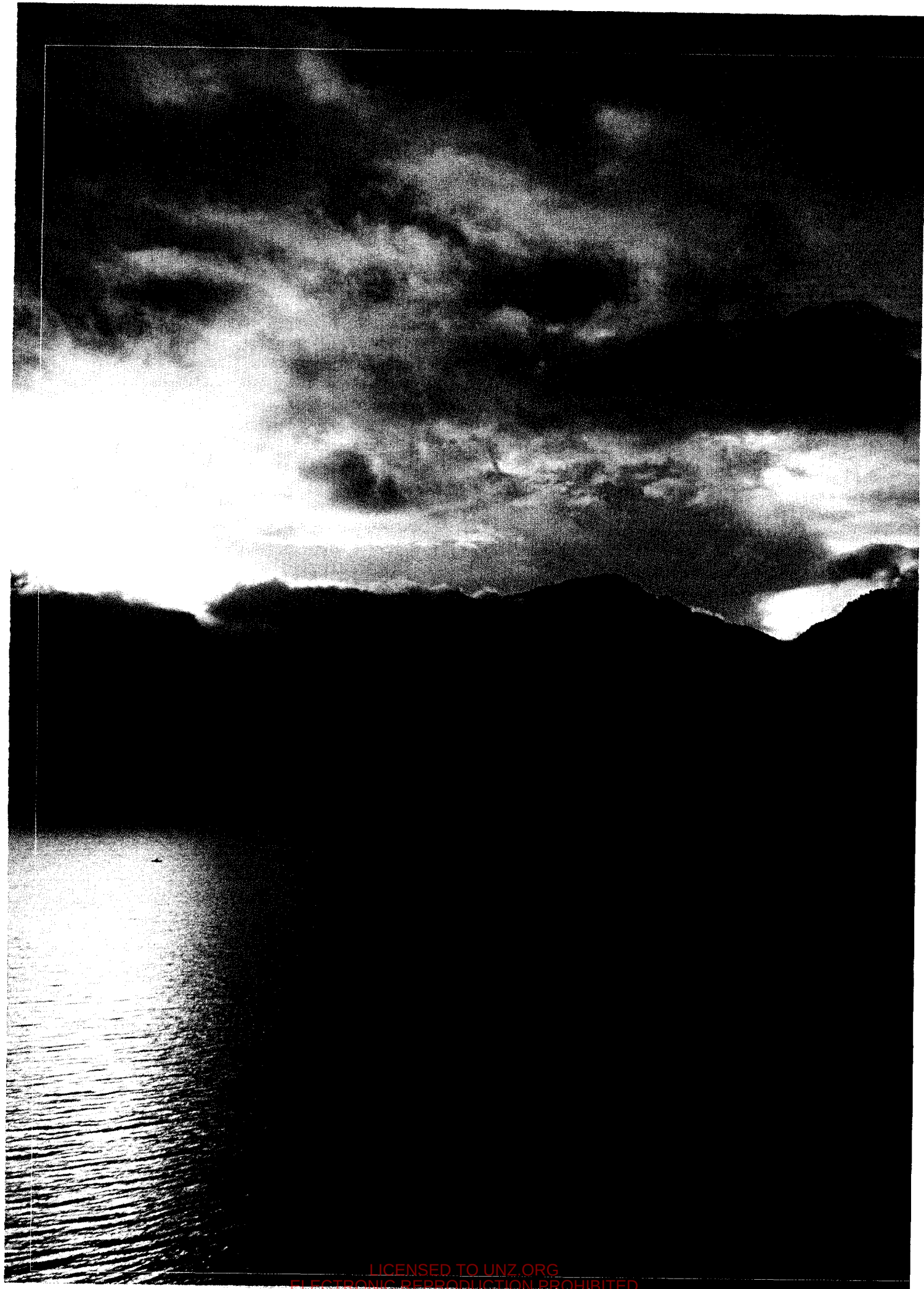
MEMBERS ONLY: a view of the bar area of the Paiza Club, an exclusive preserve within the Sands Macao casino

will allow Macau to prosper by international standards. "China is very much a partner in the success of Macau," he says. It is also assumed to be a partner in the success of Edmund Ho, whose second term as Macau's chief executive ends in two years. Everything he does right, and every step forward Macau takes under its special-administrative-region status, reflects well on China's ability to manage its "one country, two systems" commitment.

But I. Nelson Rose says that these good intentions won't matter. "I still don't understand why Nevada approved its licensees to be associated with some of these [VIP] operators," he told me. "I think there is the potential for real disaster. Some guy will get arrested, and they'll go through his books, and it will all unravel from there."

You take your clashes of ideas where you can find them, and if you get tired of hearing about other tensions between "Chinese values" and the outside world, you can just follow the casino news out of Macau. ▀

James Fallows is an *Atlantic* national correspondent.



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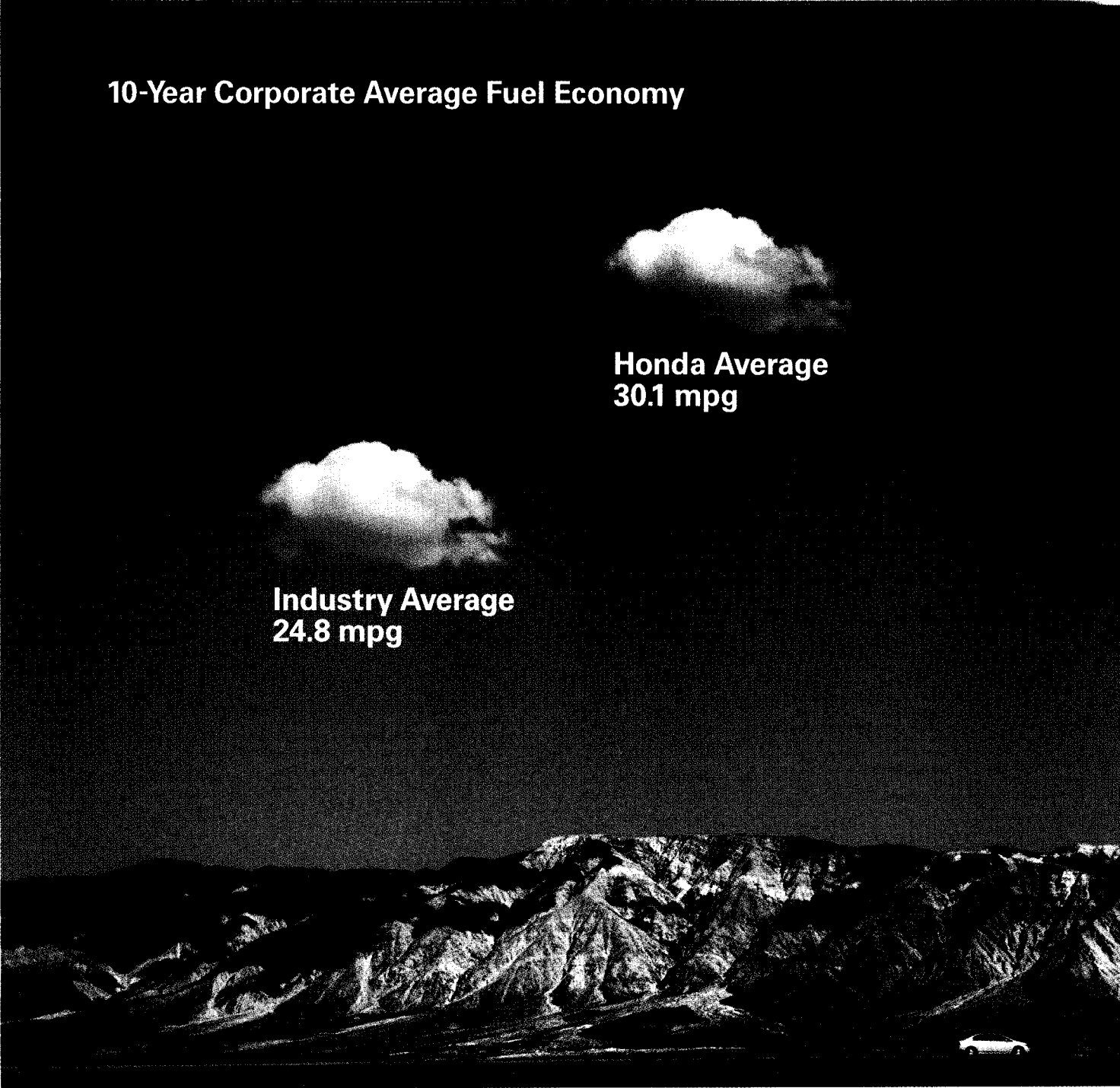
LAKE DISTRICT

Fishermen navigate Lake Atitlán, in the Guatemalan highlands. Wayne Curtis details the area's bohemian past and present in "The Grateful Living."

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HONDA
The Power of Dreams

BOOKS

Editor's Choice: The late English writer is overdue for the recognition and readers she deserves.

The Other Elizabeth Taylor

BY BENJAMIN SCHWARZ

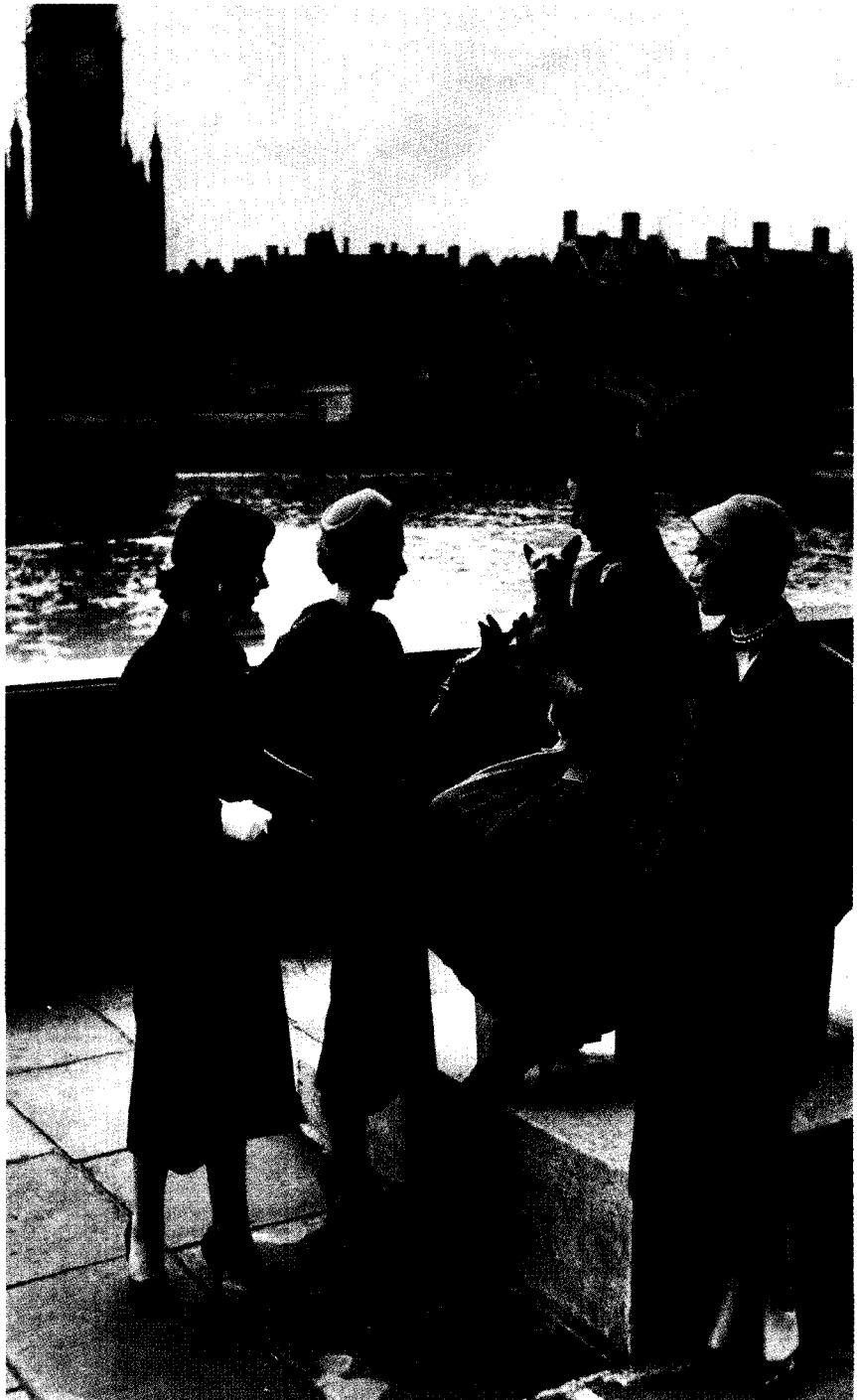
The English author Elizabeth Taylor (1912–1975) is best known for not being better known. She was a member of that characteristically British tribe of mid-20th-century women fiction writers



that includes E. H. Young, Rose Macaulay, Ivy Compton-Burnett, Sylvia Townsend Warner, Elizabeth Bowen,

Rosamond Lehmann, Mollie Panter-Downes, Sybille Bedford, Barbara Pym, and Edith Templeton. Such a large group necessarily contains a range of sensibilities, talents, and styles, though most of its members took as their subject the domestic lives of middle- and upper-middle-class women, and nearly all preferred wit and well-bred understatement to zeal or exploring Big Themes. Some were stellar, others high-second-tier. None had—or has—as passionate and select a coterie of devotees as Taylor. Her enthusiasts, driven during her lifetime and, most poignantly, after her death, have been as tireless as they have been unsuccessful in securing for her what her stalwart admirer Kingsley Amis called in 1976 “her due as one of the best English novelists born in this century.”

In the 1980s, the U.K. publisher Virago rereleased all of Taylor’s novels and short-story collections, bound in lovely floral covers and sporting introductions by celebrated British writers of the era, including her friend and champion Elizabeth Jane Howard, who hailed her as one of the 20th century’s most unfairly underread and underappreciated authors. But although those critics and writers who’ve read her nearly universally praise her, this big push, like previous efforts on behalf of Taylor’s reputation, failed to budge whoever or whatever is in charge of



JOHN CHILINGWORTH/PICTURE POST/GETTY IMAGES

canonizing authors. Now Virago has doggedly reissued six of Taylor's novels (Tralfalgar Square is distributing the Virago volumes here), this time with snappy, mod covers and with new introductions by fancy writers such as Hilary Mantel and Jonathan Keates, all of whom extol her work and bemoan her neglect.

Taylor's lack of recognition springs from accident and temperament, from literary tastes and prejudices, and from her artistic approach and ambitions. *National Velvet* came out in 1944, the year before Taylor's first novel, *At Mrs. Lippincote's*, was published. For her entire career, living and posthumous, every conversation and article about her, and every request for her books, has had to begin "Elizabeth Taylor the writer." Moreover, Taylor eschewed the London literary scene; she had, as Amis recalled, a "genuine distaste for any kind of publicity—that rarest of qualities in a writer." Although universally regarded as an extraordinarily thoughtful and polite woman, she was nearly pathologically shy. (Howard recalled trying to interview her on a television show: Taylor, "looking like a trapped and rather beautiful owl," answered 30 questions in a minute and a half.) Most crucial, in many ways Taylor's biography fit her subject, and neither appealed to the literary tastemakers.

Like Jane Austen, the writer with whom she's most often compared, Taylor led a perversely mild and parochial life. Before she was married, she worked as a governess and a librarian. With her husband, the director of his family's confectionery company, she had a boy and a girl (her fiction displays a remarkable ear for the speech of children and a subtle grasp of their peculiar obsessions, suspicions, and insecurities). Ensconced in an upper-middle-class Buckinghamshire village, she was fascinated and deeply comforted by the daily routine

of domestic life, the details of which she gave minute attention in her fiction. "I dislike much travel or change of environment and prefer the days ... to come round almost the same, week after week," she said.

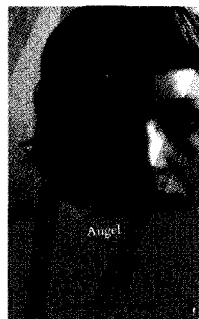
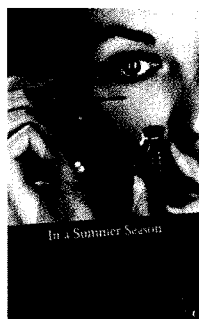
That steady rhythm allowed for her regular and admirable output—although she began to publish only when she was 34, wrote "slowly and without enjoyment, and think it all out when I am doing the ironing," and regularly put her work aside to attend to her children and household (!), she produced 12 novels, four story collections, and one children's book in 30 years. (She wrote her last novel while dying of cancer; "She had great stamina and no arrogance," Howard remembered.) Her preferences in fiction mirrored a life in which, as she acknowledged, "nothing sensational, thank heavens, has ever happened."

Favoring novels and stories true to her experience, she wrote "in scenes, rather than in narrative, which I find boring," and preferred writing and reading books in which "practically nothing happens" and very little gets resolved—a fact that makes summarizing her books pointless and, well, boring. While her writing betrays a keen and obviously knowledgeable interest in horse betting (she spiced her work with just a pinch of the louche), which was quite out of keeping in her milieu, and while her politics weren't what her detractors assumed (although happily at home in the broker belt, Taylor had in fact been a Communist in the 1930s and thereafter voted Labour), she confined her fiction largely to her limited social field: the relationships and inner lives of well-heeled women in the pretty villages of the Home Counties and in shabby-genteel Kensington and Chelsea.

All this could not have been more out of fashion, more seemingly retrograde, at a time when the gritty working-class realism of the Angry Young Men was ascendant. And although Taylor didn't limit herself to haute-bourgeois women, the other characters she explored—barmaids, as well as governesses, cooks, and other retainers of the gentry—were hardly proletarian. (In "A Dedicated Man," probably her best-known short story, Taylor unnervingly balances social comedy and pathos in her study of the duplicitous relationship at a tony country hotel between a waiter and waitress, and of the latter's emerging madness.) Indeed, as the writer Philip Hensher noted, Taylor "must be the last serious English novelist with a consistent interest in domestic servants"—an interest that, as Orwell observed about Dickens, would seem to confirm an author as hopelessly backward-looking. In the "Angry Decade" and in the socially and politically conscious 1950s and '60s, when, as Paul Bailey nicely puts it, the rage in fiction was "size, scope, relevance and Importance,"

Taylor's work was too often condescended to as high-class "women's novels."

But, of course, the English novel was born and perfected as a means to explore women's interiority and bourgeois domesticity, and these remain subjects at the heart of the modern experience, to which the novel as a form is ideally suited. Amis responded to a critic who submitted "importance" as a criterion of Taylor's worth: "Importance isn't important. Good writing is." Her prose was at once effervescent and smooth, and its clarity and precision sprang from the astringency of her vision. By excising the last three words (and maybe "too"), a character's appraisal of the protagonist of *In a Summer Season* could apply to Taylor: "A typically *English* woman ... too satirical, with one half of her mind held back always to observe and pass judgment." With piercing irony and sly wit, she conveyed and dissected in her often-bleak social comedies the prevarications



and self-justifications inherent in friendships, marriages, and family relations. I've read no writer—including Austen—who's her superior in probing self-deception (see how two characters talk themselves out of decent but inconvenient action in the opening passage of chapter five of *Blaming*).

With her cool style, flexible and sharp-edged, she shunned sentimentality; her assessments were disconcertingly no-nonsense: "It is seldom safe to confide in lonely people ... better to trust in busy, popular people, who have no time for betraying one and no personal need to do so." When dying of cancer, she wrote a grim and subtly humorous study of the selfishness of a terminally ill woman. As an observer, Taylor was without mercy. But she paired her mordancy with a generous resignation: Again and again her characters fail each other—I can't think of a relationship in Taylor's oeuvre that *isn't* ill-matched—but she seldom deplored, and her invariable compassion grew out of her realism. She had, as Angus Wilson said, "sharp claws" but a "warm heart."

Virago has shrewdly included *In a Summer Season* among the reissues. A novel that centers on the sexuality of a wife and mother of a certain age and that probes the tension between erotic love and domestic harmony, it gives the lie to the adjectives *restful* and *quiet* that dog Taylor. Although marred by an inorganic and uncharacteristically eventful ending, it contains an extraordinarily funny, razor-sharp depiction of a disastrous dinner party (see also the tea parties in *Angel*) and the loveliest evocation of a Thames Valley high summer since Orwell's *Coming Up for Air*.

Virago's project is a boon to the Republic of Letters, but no good deed goes unpunished: When a series of reissues fails to include all of a writer's work,

fans cavil. Though I would have chosen *The Sleeping Beauty* or *The Wedding Group* or *A Game of Hide-and-Seek*

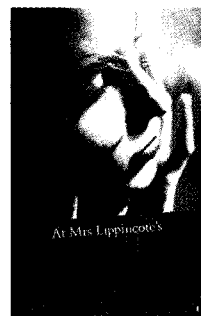
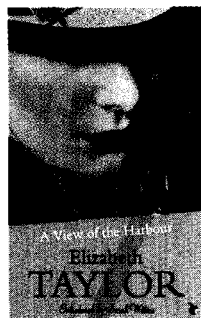
over *Angel*, that's a matter of chocolate and vanilla. Virago seriously erred, however, in failing to include even one of Taylor's story collections. To be sure, the short story "is not," as Taylor acknowledged, "the publisher's favorite child," but it's a form in which Taylor, a gimlet-eyed miniaturist, fully exploited her talents.

She was, as *The Times Literary Supplement* declared in 1972, "among the four or five most distinguished living practitioners of the art of the short story in the English-speaking world." Your local library probably has a good selection of the now-out-of-print story collections (my small library has all four), because although the literary establishment underappreciated Taylor, she had many aficionados among the kind of discriminating readers who frequented libraries in the 1950s, '60s, and '70s (yes, mostly women, many with kids in tow).

In fact, as a story writer, she likely had a bigger following in the U.S. than in the U.K., since her stories were largely published by *The New Yorker* and not by a British magazine. Probably her best collection is *The Devastating Boys*, and it's a good place to start anyway, because her attention in the title piece and in

"Tall Boy" to raceclassgender is bound to appeal to contemporary sophisticates. It also has "Miss A. and Miss M.," her most technically accomplished story; "Flesh," a funny, frank, and touching tale of unsuccessful late-middle-age sex; and—almost a throwaway—the very brief "The Fly-Paper" (Taylor was obsessed with the cruelty of that pest-control device; see the conversation in *At Mrs. Lippincote's*). This is an almost unbearably terrifying story, especially for parents, in which evil emerges casually from the day-to-day. ▢

Benjamin Schwarz is *The Atlantic's* literary editor and national editor.



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BOOKS

The gourmet's ongoing failure to think in moral terms

Hard to Swallow

BY B. R. MYERS

For centuries civilized society took a dim view of food lovers, calling them “gourmands” and “gluttons” and placing them on a moral par with lechers. They were even assigned their own place in hell, and I don’t mean a table near the kitchen: They were to be force-fed for eternity. Not until halfway through the Industrial Revolution did the word *gourmet* come into use. Those who have since applied it to themselves have done a fine job of converting the world’s scorn to respect. The pleasures of the oral cavity (though we must say “palate” instead) are now widely regarded as more important, more intrinsically moral, and a more

vital part of civilized tradition than any other pleasures. People who think nothing of saying “I’m not much of a reader” will grow shamefaced when admitting an ignorance of wine or haute cuisine. Some recent movies have even tried to turn banquets into heroic affairs. Advertising has abetted the trend, while political correctness, with its horror of judging anyone’s “lifestyle choices,” has done its bit to muffle dissent.

The sexual revolution went faster than this but not as far, which is why we can still call someone a lecher. Our common language no longer has a pejorative for those who live to eat. *Gourmand*

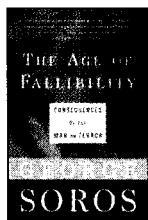
has taken on an even fancier ring than *gourmet*, while the word *glutton* can be applied only to someone who eats an enormous amount of food at one sitting—usually cheap food, and with the standard of what constitutes “enormous” revised upward each year for obvious reasons. When discussing Kim Jong Il, who dines on imported delicacies while his countrymen starve, even our own journalists must describe his fixation in terms of connoisseurship. The last holdover of the old way of thinking is the Catholic catechism, which keeps gluttony on its list of sins and indicates—by using the word *gourmandise* in the French version,

MICHAEL WITTE

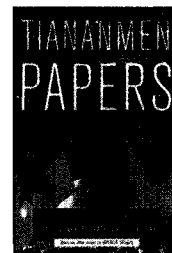
A PUBLICAFFAIRS Decade

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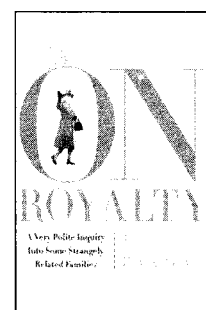
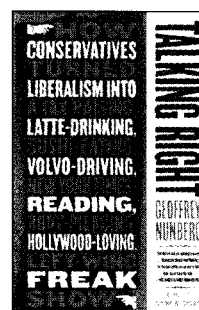
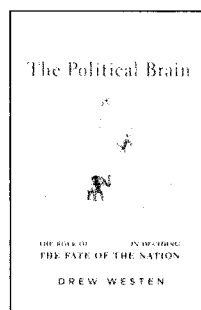


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and by defining *sin* in part as “a perverse attachment to certain goods”—that the original meaning of gluttony is to be understood. No doubt this too will change. A French committee wants to convince Rome that God condones expensive multicourse meals; He just doesn’t like us getting extra helpings.

But the idolatry of food cuts across class lines. This can be seen in the public’s toleration of a level of cruelty in meat production that it would tolerate nowhere else. If someone inflicts pain on an animal for visual, aural, or sexual gratification, we consider him a monster, and the law makes at least a token effort at punishment. If someone’s goal is to put the “product” in his mouth? *Chacun à son goût*.

Still, people are more concerned about animal welfare than they used to be. They also know that the more humanely the average animal is treated, the better it will taste. Thus it is that *Gourmet* magazine recently ran an unflinching exposé of the conditions in chicken slaughterhouses. But some things cannot be produced humanely; to taste the way it should, the foie-gras duck must be force-fed, the lobster must be boiled alive, and so on.

Literate opinion therefore suggests that a few dishes should simply be done without. This is where the serious food lover draws the line. “I detect a backlash ... among fed up gourmards,” the editor of *Best Food Writing 2006* notes with approval, “who refuse to renounce foie gras and caviar just because they are produced by less-than-noble methods.” (That *just because* says it all.) The backlash takes the form of pieces like Julie Powell’s essay “Lobster Killer,” which the anthology’s editor found “hilarious”:

Over a period of two weeks ... I went on a murderous rampage. I committed gruesome, atrocious acts ... If news of the carnage was not widely remarked upon in the local press, it was only because my victims were not Catholic schoolgirls or Filipino

nurses, but crustaceans. This distinction means that I am not a murderer in the legal sense. But I have blood on my hands, even if it is the clear blood of lobsters.

This is a prime example of food writers’ hostility to the very language of moral values. In mocking and debasing it, they exert, with Madison Avenue’s help,

a baleful influence on American English as a whole. If words like *sinful* and *decadent* are now just a cutesy way of saying “delicious but fattening,” so that any serious use of them marks the speaker as a crank, and if it is more acceptable to talk of the “evils of gluten” than of the “evils of gluttony,” much of the blame must be laid at

their doorstep. Another sampling from Powell’s piece:

People say lobsters make a terrible racket in the pot, trying—reasonably enough—to claw their way out of the water. I wouldn’t know. I spent the next twenty minutes watching a golf game on the TV with the volume turned up ... When I ventured back into the kitchen, the lobsters were very red, and not making any racket at all ... Poor little beasties.

Zoologists have recently discounted the notion that lobsters feel no pain when boiled alive. The gourmets’ response is to giggle at the plight of the “beasties” in the hope that others will follow suit. (With comparable tastelessness, a piece on foie gras in the anthology is titled “Stuffed Animals.”) But when asked to laugh at the suffering of a living thing, or to drown out a moral compunction by turning up the TV, the American meat eater begins to sense that his values are not so far from the vegetarian’s after all. If food writers want to show what “a perverse attachment to certain goods” looks like, they are going about it in just the right way.

This brings me to a would-be exception: Michael Pollan, the *New York Times Magazine* writer whose best-seller *The Omnivore’s Dilemma* has just been

published in paperback. In the first seven chapters, Pollan writes of the role of corn in American life in such an improbably thrilling manner that I have to recommend the book despite my reservations about the rest of it. About a McDonald’s meal Pollan shared with his family in a moving car, for instance, we learn that

if you include the corn in the gas tank ... the amount of corn that went into producing our movable fast-food feast would easily have overflowed the car’s trunk, spilling a trail of golden kernels on the blacktop.

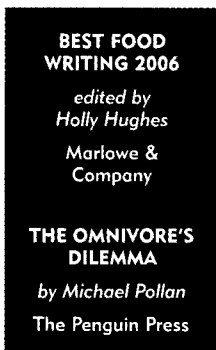
What a startling and memorable image; a lesser writer would have said “road” instead, and wondered why it didn’t quite work.

After this, though, Pollan moves on to explore what he calls the “moral and psychological implications” of killing and eating animals. The phrase shows at once where he is headed; the reason those adjectives are so often yoked in contemporary American English is that the second swallows up the first. A moral opposition to the majority’s way of doing things can thus be more easily treated, as it was in the Soviet Union, as a mental-health problem. But before going any further, I should allow Pollan to explain the book’s title. “In the fall of 2002,” he tells us,

one of the most ancient and venerable staples of human life abruptly disappeared from the American dinner table. I’m talking of course about bread. Virtually overnight, Americans changed the way they eat. A collective spasm of what can only be described as carbophobia ... ruined an untold number of perfectly good meals.

So violent a change in a culture’s eating habits is surely the sign of a national eating disorder. Certainly it would never have happened in a culture in possession of deeply rooted traditions surrounding food and eating.

The feverish tone makes clear that Pollan is writing for his fellow gourmets, the sort of people who can read the line “ruined an untold number of perfectly good meals” with a straight face. I can’t help thinking, though, that with hamburgers



and milk shakes conquering deeply rooted diets from Mexico to Micronesia, America's eating habits may well be the most stable in the world. Even the Atkins-diet craze reduced national bread sales by no more than 3 or 4 percentage points. Pollan nonetheless asserts that our dietary upheavals have returned us, with "atavistic vengeance," to a bewilderment last experienced millennia ago:

When you can eat just about anything nature has to offer, deciding what you *should* eat will inevitably stir anxiety, especially when some of the potential foods on offer are liable to sicken or kill you. This is *The Omnivore's Dilemma* ... first given that name thirty years ago by a University of Pennsylvania research psychologist named Paul Rozin.

Then Rozin's dictionary must be the one that Alanis Morissette used to look up the word *ironic*, but let that pass. Is our national eating disorder really a matter of people pacing supermarket aisles in an agony of indecision? Or do we perhaps feel too *little* anxiety about what we eat? Despite his choice of title, the subject does not hold Pollan's interest for long, so readers will have to make up their own minds.

Pivotal to the book is Pollan's claim that

our omnivorousness has done much to shape our nature, both body (we possess the omnicompetent teeth and jaws of the omnivore, equally well suited to tearing meat and grinding seeds) and soul.

One might as well describe man the way the anthropologist Ernest Becker did, as a digestive tract with teeth at one end and an anus at the other, and claim that the soul is shaped out of *that*. In which case, I don't want one. But most of us use *soul* to mean the part of humanness that is *not* shaped out of that. In contrast to the fearless Becker, Pollan thinks that taking a hard look at human nature is more a matter of leaning over the museum rail at the caveman exhibit. Seeing only the painted mammoth on the horizon, so to speak, he derives the rightness of

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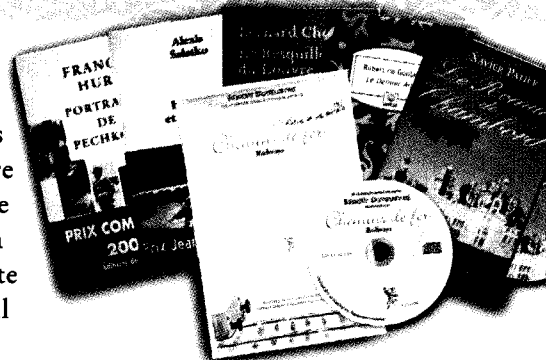


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meat eating from the fact that humans are physically suited to it, they enjoy it, and they have engaged in it until modern times without feeling much “ethical heartburn.” (Only a food writer would use such an appalling phrase.) According to Pollan, this “reality” demands our respect. The same reasoning could be used to defend our mistreatment of children: In body and instinct, we are marvelously well-equipped for making their lives hell. If many cultures now object to abusing them, it is thanks to *new* values, to people who refused to respect the time-honored “reality.”

But by reducing man’s moral nature to an extension of our instincts, Pollan is free to present his appetite as a sort of moral-o-meter, the final authority for judging the rightness of all things culinary. He shoots a wild pig, for example, hugely enjoying the experience. We even get a spiel about how hunting makes people face the inevitability of their own death. (Psychologists have long asserted the opposite: As Otto Rank put it, and in words relevant to meat eating in general, “the death fear of the ego is lessened by the killing, the sacrifice, of the other.”) Ah, but then Pollan sees a photo of himself leering over the corpse and feels bad. So is killing pigs right or wrong? Or as he puts it, “What if it turned out I couldn’t eat this meat?”

Spoiler alert: He could. He even congratulates himself on “doing well by the animal” by cooking and chewing it with the proper reverence. As reluctant as he is to attribute fear and pain to a live animal—one mustn’t anthropomorphize!—he sees nothing strange in attributing a concern for decorum to a dead one. He apparently believes that we cannot fully relate to animals *until* they become food. In the introduction, we are told that eating something—“transforming the body of the world into our bodies and minds”—constitutes the deepest possible “relationship” with it, “the most profound engagement” of all. (German police had to listen to similar reasoning in 2002 after arresting one Armin Meiwes, who had just put his omniscient jaws to work on a Siemens engineer.)

Now, Epicurus, who strikes me as a vegetarian Pollan might listen to, made the rather obvious point that no living thing *experiences* death. As soon as life ceases, the body ceases to deserve the attribute *human* or *animal*, as the root of the latter word makes especially clear. The pig thus takes its farewell from Pollan almost as soon as he pulls his trigger in greeting. The mere flesh left behind tastes remarkably like that of us “long pigs”—to use the notorious cannibal term—and the digestive tract cannot tell them apart at all. There is less “transformation” going on here than Pollan would like to think.

The moral-o-meter is applied to other meats as well (the book is subtitled “A Natural History of Four Meals”). Pollan buys a steer from a pasture in South Dakota, whereupon it is loaded onto a truck. When he catches up to it in a factory farm in Kansas, it is hock-deep in excrement. Pollan is far too talented not to convey the ghastliness of the “manure lagoon.” (This is a writer, to mention again his tour de force section on corn, who can make even biochemistry vivid.) But does he sense the poignancy in the reunion?

There stood 534 and I, staring dumbly at one another. Glint of recognition? None, none whatsoever. I told myself not to take it personally; 534 and his pen mates have been bred for their marbling, after all, not their ability to form attachments ... If I stared at my steer hard enough, I could imagine the white lines of the butcher’s chart dissecting his black hide ...

It is all too obvious which of the two has a harder time forming attachments. Then again, Pollan does not like what he sees; he senses that cows raised in such unnatural conditions cannot possibly taste good. Though he doesn’t get to eat “his” steer, he later finishes a fast-food cheeseburger that leaves him “simply, regrettably full.”

The wrongness of factory farming thus established, Pollan heads off to an idyllic farm in Virginia, “a scene of almost classic pastoral beauty.” For all

its relevance to the big picture of American meat production, it might as well have been a place where animals get to die of old age. But gourmets love to preach the benefits of organic fare to the country at large, feigning a child’s ignorance of economics all the while; it is the only way they can pass off their pursuit of pleasure as a social conscience.

On the farm, Pollan gets to try his hand at a little throat cutting:

Daniel explained that you wanted to sever only the artery, not the head, so that the heart would continue to beat and pump out the blood ... I told myself that their suffering, once their throats were slit, was brief. Yet it took several long minutes for the spasms to subside ... but the waiting birds did not seem panicked, and I took solace in their seeming obliviousness. Yet, honestly, there wasn’t much time for these reflections, because you’re working on an assembly (or, really, disassembly) line.

There is, however, time for the reflection, “Was I going to be able to enjoy eating chicken so soon after my stint in the processing shed and gut-composting pile?” The paramount question of enjoyment has ramifications for organic food in general; a gourmet is not going to stint on his pleasure just to save the Earth. When Pollan finally cooks a chicken for a few friends, the moral-o-meter’s reading is conclusive: The meal is “out of this world.” The only complication is the presence of his friends’ son Matthew, “fifteen and currently a vegetarian,” who “had many more questions about killing chickens than I thought wise to answer at the dinner table.” Of course! But doesn’t Pollan say in his introduction that the pleasures of eating are “only deepened by knowing”? And if it is so natural to kill and eat animals, and so sentimental to think otherwise, why is the vegetarian the only one who can stomach the details? Pollan can’t be bothered telling us why Matthew became a vegetarian. We are clearly meant to take it for a mere teenage phase, nothing a restriction of his options won’t cure: “He confined himself to the corn.”

Our investigative journalist interviews none of America's other vegetarians, either, relying instead on poultry farmers who claim to have sighted one or two. (We're to believe an anecdote, which shines with all the coherence and credibility of a letter to *Penthouse*, that a PETA member turned up at the "processing shed" one day, asking to kill chickens to overcome an aversion to meat.) This is not to say that Pollan brooks no contradiction. An entire chapter of *The Omnivore's Dilemma* is devoted to a scrupulously fair debate with the text of Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation*, and Pollan summarizes the Australian ethicist's views in the same lively style as his own. But he prefaces it all by smirking that he read the book in a fancy restaurant while eating "a rib-eye steak cooked medium rare," thereby putting all this morality business into the proper perspective.

Though Singer's reasoning may be inexorable, Pollan's appetite is unimpressed:

I put down my fork. If I believe in equality, and equality is based on interests rather than characteristics, then either I have to take the steer's interest into account or accept that I'm a speciesist.

For the time being, I decided, I'll plead guilty as charged. I finished my steak.

This spurious show of open-mindedness recalls Hans Küng, the Swiss theologian who uses a comparable technique when defending Christianity against secular critics. The similarity is not surprising, considering that our dietary and religious habits are both acquired in early childhood, which makes them hard to break no matter what we learn in later life. The Pollan-Küng Technique goes like this: One debates the other side in a rational manner until pushed into a corner. Then one simply drops the argument and slips away, pretending that one has not fallen short of reason but instead *transcended* it. The irreconcilability of one's belief with reason is then held up as a great mystery, the humble readiness to live with which puts one above lesser minds and their cheap certainties. As Pollan writes:

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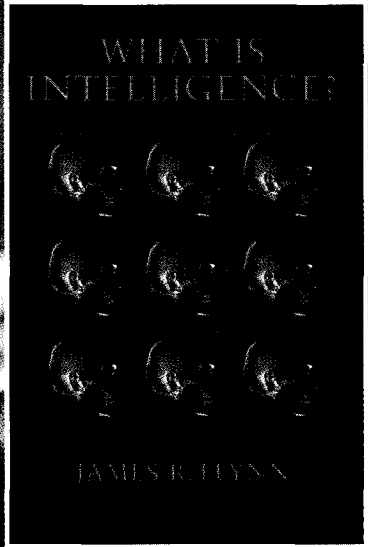
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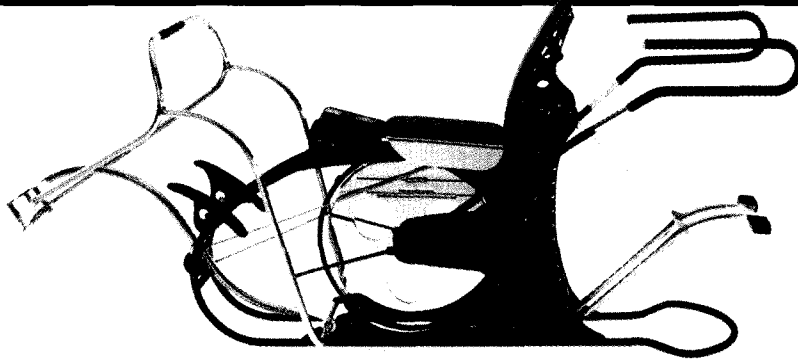
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I have to say there is a part of me that envies the moral clarity of the vegetarian, the blamelessness of the tofu eater. Yet part of me pities him, too. Dreams of innocence are just that; they usually depend on a denial of reality that can be its own form of hubris.

How arrogant, in other words, how pitifully close to mental illness, to want to be a better person! But this is where the Christian and the gourmet part ways.

All the same, Pollan decides to indulge his inner George Plimpton again, becoming "a reluctant, and, I fervently hoped, temporary vegetarian." How seriously he took his meat-free diet can be guessed at. Though he claims to have stuck to it for at least a month, this most voluble of food writers does not name a single thing he ate. Nor, it seems, did he dine with any vegetarians.

"What troubles me most about my vegetarianism," Pollan nonetheless has the fatuity to write,

is the subtle way it alienates me from other people ... As a guest, if I neglect to tell my host in advance that I don't eat meat, she feels bad, and if I *do* tell her, she'll make something special for me, in which case *I'll* feel bad. On this matter I'm inclined to agree with the French, who gaze upon any personal dietary prohibition as bad manners ... I also feel alienated from ... family traditions like my mother's beef brisket at Passover.

It is common these days to see moral arguments veer off into appeals to self-interest. We have reached a pretty pass when they start veering off into the realm of etiquette. The bit about Passover surprised me a little, Pollan having just tacitly admitted what he thinks of Orthodox Jews, but perhaps for him it's all about the brisket. A record of the gourmet's ongoing failure to think in moral terms, *The Omnivore's Dilemma* helps one to understand why no reformer ever gave a damn about fine dining—or the family dinner table either. When Jesus vowed to turn children against their parents, he knew he'd be ruining an untold number of perfectly good meals. ▀

B. R. Myers is a contributing editor of *The Atlantic* and the author of *A Reader's Manifesto* (2002).

BOOKS

With his extravagant designs, Paul Poiret ruled the world of fashion—until modern simplicity did him in.

The King Is Dead

BY LYNN YAEGER

This past summer, on a perfect afternoon, I stopped by the Metropolitan Museum of Art to gaze with intense desire at a 1911 Paul Poiret evening coat made of printed velvet designed by Raoul Dufy and featuring humongous sleeves and a turquoise lining still vibrant nearly 100 years on. I am a notorious overdresser, and on this particular day I was wearing a black silk chiffon smock over a Liberty of London petticoat along with a pair of scarlet leggings and bronze dance slippers, an ensemble that would have made Poiret blush with pleasure. All around me swirled other visitors, most dressed in jeans and T-shirts, some even unashamedly sporting that contemporary badge of sartorial inelegance, the water bottle. They may have been looking with appreciation at the Poiret creations on display—his cylindrical gold-metallic “Irudrée” evening dress with its queer puffy roll around the hips, his ankle-length mauve-and-gold “day” dress (what a day that must have been), his famous “sorbet” ensemble with its hoop-skirted tunic—but unlike me and a handful of other quirky dressers around town, these blue-jeaned water-bottle guzzlers were not costumed for the first reel of a Fellini film. Though they might never know it, they were the spiritual descendants of Coco Chanel, the subject of a previous retrospective at the Met and in Poiret’s lifetime his greatest rival.

The exhibit at the Met was titled “Poiret: King of Fashion,” which is also the name of the designer’s 1931 autobiography, and in the decade leading up to the First World War, he really did hold sway in the court of style. As the curators of the show, Harold Koda and Andrew



SULTAN’S DELIGHT: Paul Poiret designed this ensemble for his wife to wear to his infamous “Thousand and Second Night” party, in Paris, in 1911.

Bolton, write in the preface to the Met’s recently published *Poiret*,

In freeing women from corsets and dissolving the fortified grandeur of the obdurate, hyperbolic silhouette, Poiret effected a concomitant revolution in dressmaking, one that shifted the emphasis away from the skills of tailoring to ... the skills of draping.

Which is an elaborate way of saying that Poiret liberated women from the stifling, tight-waisted, hoop-skirted monstrosities of the 19th century, basically discarding the notorious S-shaped silhouette,

padded fore and aft, which Poiret himself once wrote made women seem to be “divided in two and ... dragging an anchor.” In its place, he offered simple empire-waisted dresses, cocoon coats, and dolman sleeves in bold clashing colors inspired by the costumes of the Ballets Russes, rendered in fabrics sumptuous enough for a seraglio.

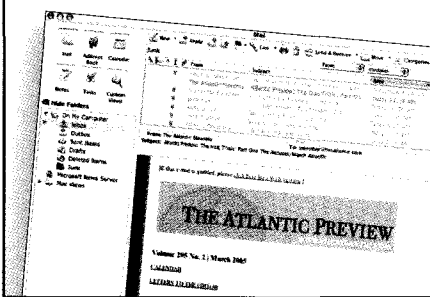
Though these new styles caused a sensation when they were introduced early in the 20th century, Poiret’s contributions are frequently overlooked today. His name does not necessarily

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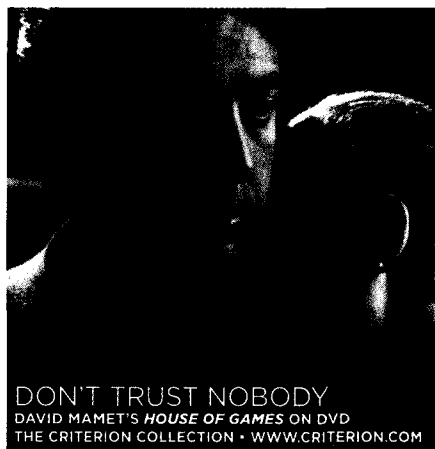
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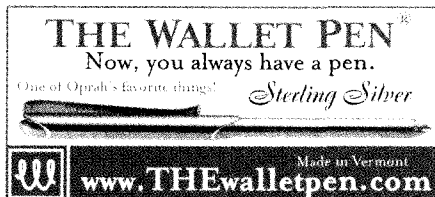


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come to mind when one is ticking off the shape-shifters of the past 100-odd years, a roster that begins with Worth's hoop skirts, moves to the incendiary Chanel, acknowledges the surrealist Schiaparelli, nods to Dior's New Look, and then explodes into a thousand pieces during the fashion revolution of the 1960s. And yet Poiret's role, though not always acknowledged, is as significant as those of the other dazzlers.

Poiret was born in Paris in 1879. He was a dreamy youth, and to push him into the real world, his father sent him to work as a delivery boy for a firm of umbrella makers. According to François Baudot's brisk if slender *Poiret* (every book ever written about Poiret, it seems, is titled "Poiret"),

At some point, his sisters gave him a small wooden figure ... In his room, during the evenings, he fashioned stunning outfits out of scraps of silk he picked up in the umbrella factory.

Poiret soon ditched the doll in favor of live mannequins. He served apprenticeships at two eminent couture houses, Doucet and Worth, where his revolutionary impulses shortly emerged: While at Worth, he made a plain black wool cloak cut like a kimono for the Russian princess Bariatinsky; Koda and Bolton recount that when the princess saw it, she cried out, "What horror; with us, when there are low fellows who run after our sledges and annoy us, we have their heads cut off, and we put them in sacks just like that."

Clearly, someone designing these kinds of clothes needed to be his own boss. In 1903, with money lent by his mother, Poiret went into business on his own, opening a shop on the Rue Auber from which to promulgate his transgressive ideas, among them designs based on the Directoire dresses of the late 18th century, with raised waists that resided just under the bosom and skirts that fell straight.

He also experimented with lamp-shade tunics and hobble skirts. ("Yes, I freed the bust but I shackled the legs," Poiret said of the latter innovation.) More radical still was his attitude toward underwear: In place of the whalebone corset reviled by everyone from doctors to suffragists, Poiret proffered the soft *cache-corset*, a precursor of the brassiere; a wide, stiff belt took the place of tight lacings. Instead of those gigantic hats that could sport everything from a couple of egret feathers to an entire dead animal, Poiret recommended a neat and trim Indian turban. Nor was that the end of his fascination with

clothing from the four corners of the Earth: Other ensembles echoed Middle Eastern dancing girls, Ukrainian peasants, Bedouins in striped burnouses, and Isadora Duncanesque Greek youths.

In 1911, at the height of his creative powers, Poiret held his notorious "Thousand and Second Night" party. Yvonne Deslandres' description of this event, in her definitive *Poiret*, gives some idea of what he considered a good time. "Persian orchestras sheltered in copses; there were parrots in trees studded with a thousand twinkling lights, pink ibis, multicolored cushions ..."

In the shank of the evening, "the sultan—Poiret himself"—rescued his wife and favorite model, Denise, who had been languishing dramatically in a gilded cage.

The year Poiret threw his party, Coco Chanel was 28. If he was the quintessential Parisian (in his autobiography, he describes himself as "a Parisian from the heart of Paris"), she was the fiercely ambitious arriviste. In so many ways, they were almost comically opposite: He was a big, gregarious bear; she was sharp-elbowed and slender, flat of hips and chest, possessed of the physique that would triumph as the universal ideal in the unfolding century. He adored the bright hues of the Ballets Russes;

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by Harold Koda and Andrew Bolton

Metropolitan Museum of Art/Yale

POIRET

by François Baudot

Assouline

POIRET

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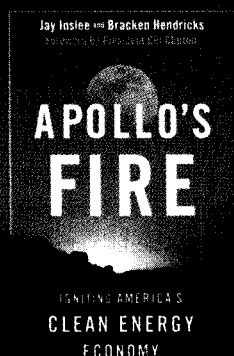
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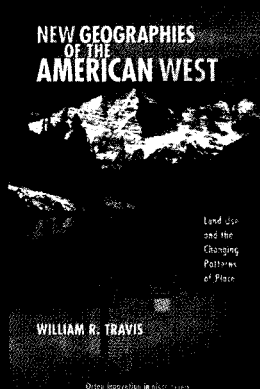


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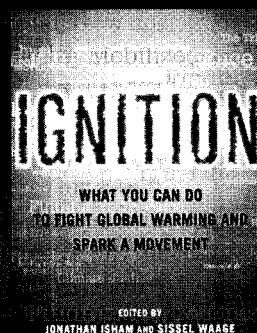


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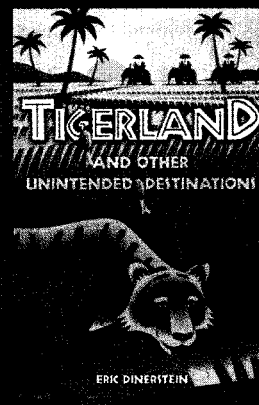


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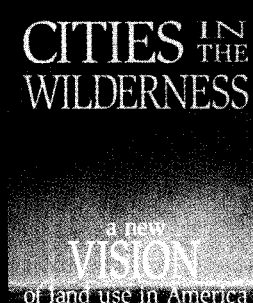


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among her major contributions to fashion was a reliance on black. By the time she arrived in Paris, Chanel had already lived several lifetimes, having grown up as a charity pupil in an orphanage in central France, then pursued a minimally successful career as a *gommeuse*, a sort of saucy cabaret singer, before falling in with Etienne Balsan, a wealthy if not particularly scintillating horseman. The other women in Balsan's circle—actresses, demimondaines—greatly admired Coco's underplayed personal style, which included masculine tweeds, crisp white blouses, and relatively unadorned hats at a time when most women were virtually entombed in piles of feathers and lace. Despite their interest, when a bored Chanel begged Balsan to launch her in the fashion business, he was less than enthusiastic.

Chanel's next lover was the rather more supportive British coal scion Arthur "Boy" Capel. She went with him to Paris and began selling hats, at first from Balsan's apartment on the Boulevard Malesherbes (Chanel's private affairs tended to be complicated). Business was brisk: While Poiret and his ilk were pretending to be pashas and geishas, Chanel was opening a boutique in Deauville where, in addition to her trademark austere hats, she sold such groundbreaking garments as turtleneck sweaters. Axel Madsen, in his *Chanel: A Woman of Her Own*, sums up Chanel's impertinence neatly:

In 1913, knits were considered unsuitable and too limp and lifeless for anything but underwear, flannel too working class or masculine, to be stylish for women. She made jersey chic with her simple gray and navy dresses that were quite unlike anything women had worn before. It would all look elementary in retrospect, but at the time nothing guaranteed that a demanding patrician clientele would accept the notion that natural casualness underscored femininity, that a secure woman could afford *not* to accentuate her charms.

There is an extraordinary photograph of Chanel from this era: She stands outside her Deauville shop in an oversize

belted cardigan, her hands jammed in its pockets, and a pristine skirt; on her head is a simple broad-brimmed hat. This outfit, with perhaps a few minor adjustments (the skirt is extremely long), could have been worn on the street in 1970, or 2007, and not raised much of an eyebrow. The same, of course, cannot be said for Poiret's over-the-top ensembles, though in other ways he was dazzlingly modern. By 1911, he had more or less invented what is now known as lifestyle marketing, setting up a school for working-class girls who had artistic talent—he called them Martines, after his second daughter—to produce furniture, carpets, and glassware. Poiret also introduced a signature perfume, Rosine (named after another daughter), packaged with his usual extravagance; subsequent scents were presented in bottles made of Murano blown glass or topped with tricolored cockades or ivory stoppers. He may have picked up the ball, but Chanel ran with it: In 1921, she came out with Chanel No. 5, which is still considered the most successful fragrance of all time and is sold to this day in an unadorned square flacon.

Poiret's fancy frocks and matching divans, his perfumes with names like "Minaret" and "Fanfan la Tulipe," were intended for a woman with the time, resources, and desire to swan around the house in an outfit shaped like a sorbet cup, smelling like Scheherazade. The Chanel girl, on the other hand, could slip into one of those famous little black dresses, authentic or imitation (they were copied almost immediately, a development the farsighted Chanel wrote off as a good thing), toss a fake-gold chain over her head (costume jewelry was another Chanel innovation), and jump on the Métro.

Poiret did not take this lying down. As Baudot writes, he loathed these new women, these "undernourished telegraph boys dressed in black jersey"; Madsen says Poiret's term for the styles favored by Chanel's slender, preternaturally youthful flappers was "*misérabilisme de luxe*." Deslandres has the last word—she describes a chance meeting,

possibly apocryphal, between Poiret and a black-clad Chanel on a Paris street:

"Well, Mademoiselle, who are you in mourning for?" he is said to have asked the young Chanel one day ...

"For you, dear Monsieur!"

By 1930, it was all over for Poiret. He had wagered that 20th-century women would want to turn themselves into sumptuous art objects and fantastical divas, but he bet on the wrong horse. He lost his fashion house to creditors, his assets were sold off, and he was reduced to relative penury. (Even so, his old insouciance remained intact: Deslandres writes that when he was given 40,000 francs by

least where clothing is concerned, the line between rich and poor has been almost completely obliterated, and that the contemporary fetish for comfort is now shared by people from all social classes. But cozy as they may have been in their pajama-like ensembles, they do not account for the entire fashion landscape. There are still a few of us who follow Poiret's lead, who deck ourselves out in satin and spangles for the sheer joy of dressing up, inconvenient as this may be when you have to strap on a seat belt or go through airport security.

After my visit to the museum, I wandered down my favorite shopping streets, where Poiret's heartbeat, though faint,

When Poiret asked a black-clad Chanel for whom she was in mourning, she replied, "For you, dear Monsieur!"

well-meaning friends to pay off debts, he immediately set out for the shops of the Rue Royale and the Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré and was 10,000 in the hole by the time he got home.)

Poiret died in 1944, at least partially from a broken heart. Five months later, Chanel was detained by the Comité d'Épuration and called to account for her appalling wartime record, most of which consisted of living high on the hog at the Ritz with a German officer. According to Madsen,

The way Cecil Beaton heard it, when Coco was asked if it were true that she had consorted with a German, she replied, "Really, sir, a woman of my age cannot be expected to look at his passport if she has a chance of a lover."

It was rumored that only the intervention of Winston Churchill, a friend from prewar days, saved her from having her head shaved.

Of course, the visitors milling around at the Met were mostly ignorant of this ignominious biography. What they did know is that they can wear utilitarian fabrics practically anywhere, that at

is still audible. I could hear it in John Galiano's artfully embroidered kimono coats, in Roberto Cavalli's heavily embellished, so-bad-it's-good sportswear, and in the glittery designs of Christian Lacroix. But perhaps no one embodies the spirit of Poiret as completely as the Belgian designer Dries Van Noten, who commands an impressive amount of real estate at Barneys. Van Noten thinks nothing of slathering beads and smocking on toga-length tunics, and more often than not includes a cocoon coat or two in his collections.

At Barneys, still basking in the glow of the Met exhibit, I decided to try on a high-waisted, heavily appliquéd Van Noten dress that bore a slight resemblance to that Poiret-Dufy coat at the museum. When I came out of the fitting room, I thought it looked pretty good. But even I, who cling so tenaciously to my fancy-dress principles, couldn't help but wonder how much cooler it might be with a pair of jeans pulled on underneath and a T-shirt peeking out from its strappy bodice. ■

Lynn Yaeger writes about style and fashion for *The Village Voice*. She lives in New York City.

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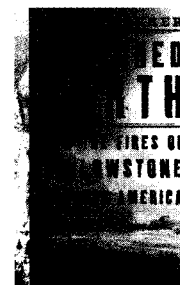
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How Edmund Wilson made the labor of criticism into an art

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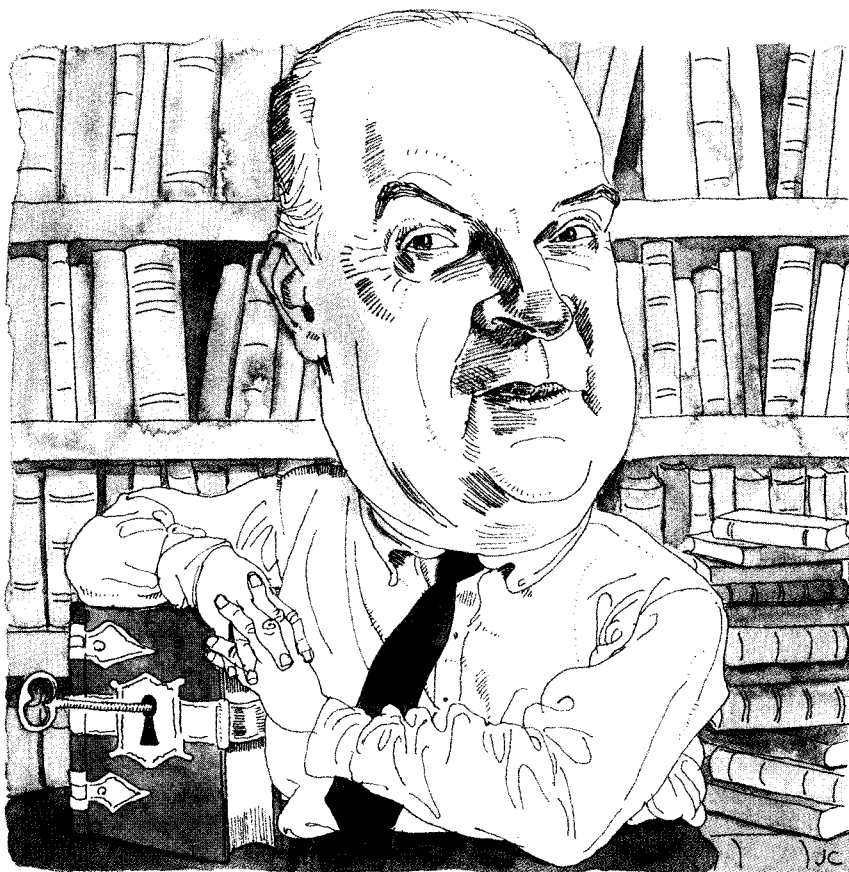
BY CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

In a beautifully turned reminiscence of Alexander Woollcott published in 1943, and originally intended as a defense of that great critic against an ungenerous obituarist, Edmund Wilson managed to spin what he admitted was a slight acquaintance into a charming portrait of a man and of a moment—the moment being the time when both men's parents were connected with a Fourierist socialist community in Red Bank, New Jersey. Recollections of Woollcott the man of the theater, intercut with reflections on the arcana of the American left, combine to make a fine profile and a nice period piece: journalism at its best. What caught and held me, though, was an episode in the 1930s, when Wilson, fresh from reporting on the labor front for *The New Republic*, was invited to call on Woollcott at Sutton Place:

As soon as I entered the room, he cried out, without any other greeting: "You've gotten very fat!" It was his way of disarming, I thought, any horror I might have felt at his own pudding-like rotundity, which had trebled since I had seen him last.

This, and other aspects of the evening, make clear that Wilson understood why Woollcott's personality didn't appeal to everybody. But the preemptive strike on the question of girth also made me realize that there must have been a time when Edmund Wilson was thin.

This absolutely negated the picture that my mind's eye had been conditioned to summon. Wilson's prose, if not precisely rotund, was astonishingly *solid*. One cannot turn the pages of this heavy and handsome set, produced by the Library of America, without a sense of his mass and weight and gravitas. He was the sort of man who, as people



used to say, "got up" a subject. The modern and vulgar way of phrasing this is to say that so-and-so reads a book "so you don't have to." Wilson, though, presumed a certain amount of knowledge in his readers, kept them well-supplied with allusions and cross-references, and undertook to help them fill in blanks in their education. An autodidact himself, he seems to have hoped to be the cause of autodidacticism in others.

An excellent instance of Wilson as a sort of co-reader, tutor, and literary adviser comes in his successive discussions of *Finnegans Wake*.

In an essay originally included in *The Wound and the Bow*, titled "The Dream of H. C. Earwicker," he guides his audience through the extraordinary density and intricacy of the slumber life of James Joyce's snoring pub keeper. He furnishes handholds and issues both exhortations and admonitions: Readers are told, in effect, that there will be passages of extreme difficulty and complexity (and of plain longeur), but they are simultaneously assured that the effort will be rewarding and worthwhile. Footnotes are provided, to point them to a collection of essays

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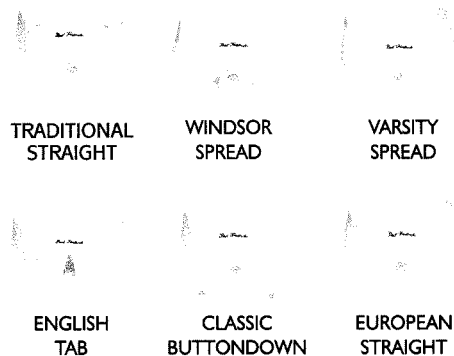
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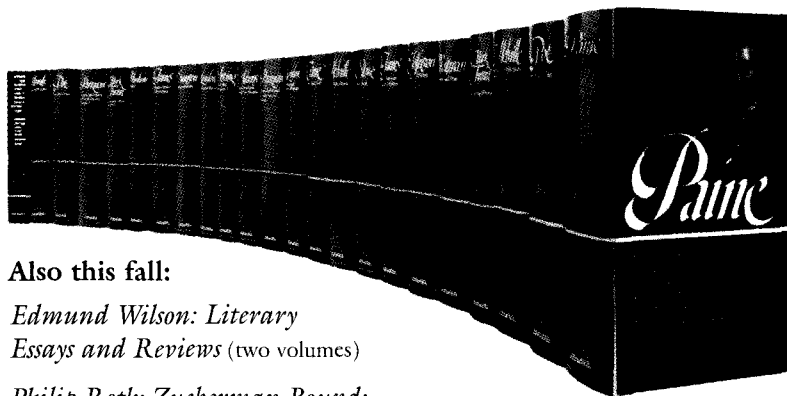
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published by *Transition* magazine in Paris, which may help to supply a "key." A learned reference is made to Part III, Chapter III of Max Eastman's *The Literary Mind*, which, when consulted, discloses Joyce's rather daunting ambition: a desire that his readers would devote their entire lives to the scrutiny of his work. Almost as if stiffening himself to accept this challenge, Wilson writes:

Just as Joyce in *Ulysses* laid the *Odyssey* under requisition to help provide a structure for his Material—material which, once it had begun to gush from the rock of Joyce's sealed personality at the blow of the Aaron's rod of free association, threatened to rise and submerge the artist like the flood which the sorcerer's apprentice let loose by his bedeviled broom; so in the face of an even more formidable danger, he has here brought in the historical theory of the eighteenth-century philosopher, Giambattista Vico, to help him to organize *Finnegans Wake*.

At first one is inclined to think that Wilson has become infected by the gorgeous prolixity of his subject, then impelled to invoke that old *New Yorker* injunction ("Block That Metaphor!"), and only then to suspect that he might be doing it on purpose. And notice the introduction of Vico, whose work served as a kind of template for *To the Finland Station*, Wilson's grand study of teleology and messianism.

In a subsequent essay, "A Guide to *Finnegans Wake*," published in August 1944, Wilson again enlisted his readers in the grand attempt to master the Joycean. This time a new codex, *A Skeleton Key to Finnegans Wake*, written by Joseph Campbell and Henry Morton Robinson, was the spark to his enthusiasm. After advising us that it is better to come to the subject by way of Virgil, Dante, and Milton, he added that the best course of action is to acquire the original, plus "the Campbell-Robinson key," and

prepare to have them around for years ... Joyce worked on it through seventeen years, and it is equivalent to about seventeen books by the ordinary gifted writer.

Having thoroughly challenged his audience in this forbidding yet exciting way (and I recommend heartily that anyone hesitating over Joyce follow Wilson's counsel), he averred that the co-authors of the guide merited "a citation from the Republic of Letters."

Now, when is the last time that you saw *that* expression in print? Or that you came across a reviewer who tried to make your reading life more exacting rather than less? It is not easy to imagine Mr. Wilson (he almost invariably alluded to other authors as "Mr.," "Mrs.," or "Miss") sending in his annual recommendation for the summer "beach bag," let alone responding to the even more rebarbative notion that people should be more likely to buy and enjoy books at Christmas. His famous preprinted postcard, which he sent out to supplicants of all kinds, showed him massively indifferent to the petty seductions of literary celebrity:

Mr. Edmund Wilson regrets that it is impossible for him to: Read manuscripts, write articles or books to order, write forewords or introductions, make statements for public purposes, do any kind of editorial work, judge literary contests, give interviews, take part in writers' conferences, answer questionnaires, contribute to or take part in symposiums or "panels" of any kind, contribute manuscripts for sales, donate copies of his books to libraries, autograph works for strangers, allow his name to be used on letterheads, supply personal information about himself, or supply opinions on literary or other subjects.

But if this gives the impression of a sort of Jamesian loftiness, then the idea is counteracted by Wilson's decision to engage with popular fiction. His contempt for the slovenly and disgraceful habit of "reading" detective stories—especially the dismal pulp produced by Dorothy L. Sayers—was offset by an admiration for Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and by his readiness to respond to the many readers who wrote in to disagree with him.

Anyone who has ever tried to digest *The Da Vinci Code*, for example,

or the *Left Behind* series, will know that bad writing, aimed at a subliterate audience, is actually much more difficult to read than anything by Borges or Kundera. But a certain populism, perhaps, inhibits critics from saying so. I borrow from Jacobo Timerman's wonderful remark on scanning the Cuban Communist daily *Granma* ("a degradation of the act of reading"), and I make a bet that the *Left Behind* books repose, unfinished, on the shelf along with the seldom-opened family Bible. And I draw confidence from Wilson's admirable pug-nacity in "Who Cares Who Killed Roger Ackroyd?" In discussing one of the tales of Margery Allingham, he stated baldly, "The story and the writing both showed a surface so wooden and dead that I could not keep my mind on the page." He defied his correspondents to disagree with him, and many shamefacedly did admit that they, too, found the stuff bad almost beyond endurance, yet clung to it as a pathetic addiction. Generous as (almost) always—he did take a decided whack at the now-forgotten critic Bernard DeVoto ("I hadn't quite realized before, though I had noted his own rather messy style, to what degree he was insensitive to writing")—Wilson did show that he could tell gold from dross by praising Raymond Chandler, before ending the essay in this fashion:

Friends, we represent a minority, but Literature is on our side. With so many fine books to be read, so much to be studied and known, there is no need to bore ourselves with this rubbish.

As with the "Republic of Letters," Wilson was unashamed to capitalize what was worth upholding and defending. The citizens of that putative republic, those who trusted and corresponded with him, knew that they had a stern but staunch friend who might rebuke and reward them in the same conversation. And this companion thought that there *was* such a thing as taste, and that it was not entirely relative.

One test of *un homme sérieux* is that it is possible to learn from him even when one radically disagrees with him. Wilson

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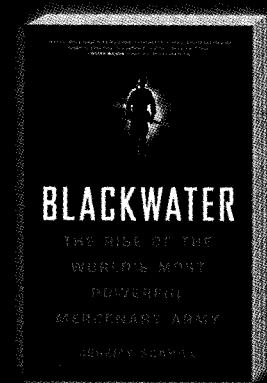
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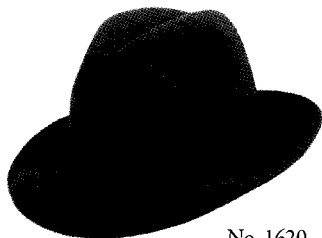
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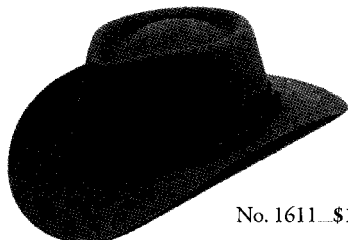
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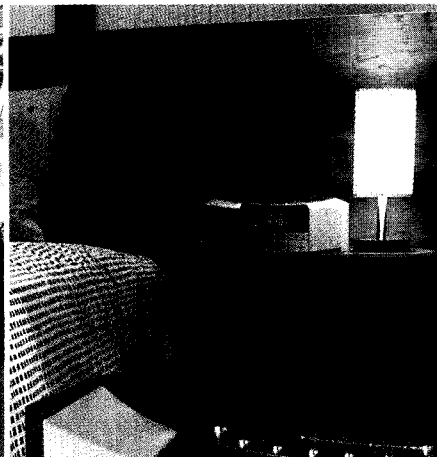
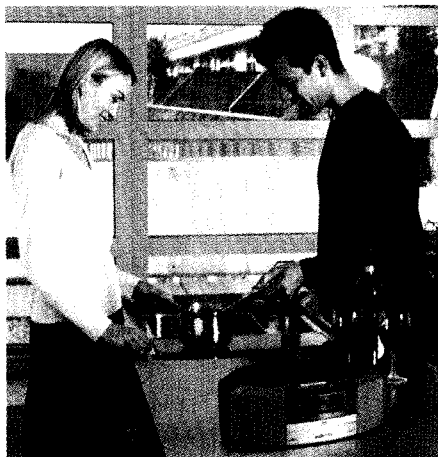
seems to me to underestimate the importance of Kafka in an almost worrying way (worrying because it shows a want of sympathy with those who just *knew* about the coming totalitarianism), yet I confess I had never thought of Kafka as having been so much influenced by Flaubert. When writing about Ronald Firbank, Wilson seems almost elephantine in his mass. Often somewhat out of sympathy with the English school—and again sometimes for self-imposed political reasons—he was very early and acute in getting much of the point of Evelyn Waugh. He was rightly rather critical of *Brideshead Revisited*, and it makes me whimper when I see how closely he read the novel, and how coldly he isolated unpardonable sentences such as “Still the clouds gathered and did not break.” Nonetheless, he predicted a big success for the book and, in discussing it and its successor *The Loved One*, managed to be both coolly secular and sympathetic, pointing out that Waugh was actually rather afraid of the consequences of his own Catholicism. An American critic might have chosen to resent the easy shots that Waugh took at Los Angeles and “Whispering Glades”; Wilson contented himself with indulgently pointing out that Waugh’s Church practiced a far more fantastic and ornamental denial of death than any Californian mortician.

Naturally, much of Wilson’s political material has dated. (He was one of those who combined socialism with snobbery by saying that “the radio and motor industries” prospered only by “selling these articles to many people who didn’t need them.” One wonders whom he had in mind.) And the argument about, say, Herbert Croly’s *The Promise of American Life* has long since cooled. But anyone wishing to revisit the intellectual and literary passions of the period will be well advised to do so in the company of someone who could be a Virgil as well as recommend the reading of him. Edmund Wilson came as close as anybody has to making the labor of criticism into an art. ▮

Christopher Hitchens is an Atlantic contributing editor and a Vanity Fair columnist.

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COVER to COVER

FICTION

Shakespeare's Kitchen

by Lore Segal (New Press)

A refugee from the Anschluss, Segal is particularly interested in how people establish and maintain connections when thrust into a new milieu. These wry, finely honed, interlocking stories (some first published in *The New Yorker*) center on a young Austrian woman, recently transplanted from New York, who joins an institute "that paid its members ... to read and write and think" in a small Connecticut town.

The Maytrees

by Annie Dillard (HarperCollins)

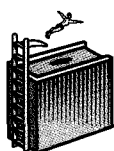
This is a humane story of the way a straying husband and a forgiving wife negotiate their decades-long relationship—a relationship that involves both infidelity and, eventually, an unusually complex domestic arrangement. Although Dillard's examination of all manner of human interactions is nuanced, and her evocation of Cape Cod is at once precise and gorgeous, the author is more essayist and poet than novelist; she assesses emotion, rather than creating it, and so holds the reader at a distance.

SOCIETY and CULTURE

Contested Waters

by Jeff Wiltse (North Carolina)

In this intelligent, compelling social history, Wiltse traces the development of American municipal swimming pools from 19th-century public baths intended to cleanse the Great Unwashed, to optimistic New Deal public works, to the postwar boom in private-pool construction that left millions "swimming alone." A serious historian ("The consequences of the sexualization of pool culture have been profound, especially for women") writing about a serious subject, the



author details with palpable regret the public pools' failure to live up to the democratic promise ascribed to them by one 1930s booster: "Take away the sham and hypocrisy of clothes, don a swim suit, and we're all the same." Wiltse also highlights the complex and ironic dynamics of social change (the first pool in the North to be integrated by gender, in St. Louis in 1913, for example, was also the first to be segregated by race), and he argues, poignantly and persuasively, that the great retreat into the backyard that accompanied suburbanization and the decline of the central cities has led to "atomized recreation and diminished public discourse."

The Book of David

by David Steinberg (Simon & Schuster)

The likable, well-known Canadian comic's first book finds him plying his well-worn sermonizing shtick and proto-Larry Sanders name dropping—cum—celeb bashing. His tongue-through-cheek pronouncements aren't likely to win converts, but his hand-wringing, Old Testament-spoofing asides are a nice sop to the Borscht Belt faithful.

The Enigma Woman

by Kathleen A. Cairns (Nebraska)

At the time James M. Cain's noir classic *The Postman Always Rings Twice* appeared, a real slice of that kind of Californian life was unfolding in a Los Angeles courtroom and in the sensationalistic press. After a trial in 1934 for murdering her abusive husband, which featured inadequate defense counsel and a judge who was summoned to take the witness stand against her, Nellie May Madison became the first woman in Southern California sentenced to execution. Cairns tells her story with considerable sociological and psychological acuity. Perhaps the most fascinating aspect of this tale is how the cut-and-dried, seemingly heartless justice system of the 1930s ultimately

produced a punishment that was just and enlightened and would generally satisfy today's more liberal attitudes toward spousal abuse and homicide.

HISTORY

Troublesome Young Men

by Lynne Olson (FSG)

That arch-determinist Tolstoy would doubtless have said that England in 1940 so desperately needed a savior that someone like Winston Churchill simply *had* to arise and rescue it from disaster. According to this riveting book, which mixes personal drama and gossip with high politics, it took a lot of scheming by a fascinating assortment of maverick and established politicians to bring the right man to 10 Downing Street at the right time. Olson tells her story with verve, never letting the reader forget what was really at risk—and what might have happened if these particular troublemakers hadn't been so willing to stir the political pot.

The Road to Disunion, Volume II: Secessionists Triumphant, 1854–1861

by William W. Freehling (Oxford)

The second part of Freehling's monumental study of the Civil War's causes and the South's road to secession skillfully outlines the political fissures within pre-Civil War Dixie. While the Deep South argued consistently against any sort of compromise, states farther north such as North Carolina and Virginia—less dependent on the slave economy—held out hope, even after Lincoln's election, for accommodation with the Union. Occasional cringe-inducing efforts at an aphoristic, "literary" style notwithstanding, this sure-to-be-lasting work—studded with pen portraits and consistently astute in its appraisal of the subtle cultural and geographic variations in the region—adds crucial layers to scholarship on the origins of America's bloodiest conflict.



BIOGRAPHY
and MEMOIR**Coltrane: The Story of a Sound**

by Ben Ratliff (FSG)

Overheated prose seems to follow Coltrane like an insistent stream of bum notes, but Ratliff, the dauntingly omnivorous *New York Times* critic, manages cool restraint in this clear-eyed, nuanced consideration of the jazz giant's influence. Central to Ratliff's success is his avoidance of that most Ken Burnsian of pitfalls: the temptation to apply an evolutionary model when evaluating America's greatest original art form—a temptation amplified when the subject is the visionary commonly held to be the "last major figure in the evolution of jazz." Laudable, too, is the structural tack taken: The book is neatly bisected, with the first half devoted to the saxophonist's artistic development (especially the spiritually questing final decade), while the second contextualizes and meditates on the transcendent frequencies that resulted.

The Diana Chronicles

by Tina Brown (Doubleday)

It seems to be the perfect fit of author and subject: two chic blondes adept at understanding image and how to manipulate it. Brown also has some genuine advantages, not least the distinction of actually having spent some time talking to (although not interviewing) both Diana and Charles. Her familiarity with the social and media milieus in which Diana played out her saga is evident throughout this knowing, glossy book, which is a lively read, with plenty of gossip. Some of it is all too familiar, though there is an occasional new tidbit, piquant if not always credible. But Brown fails to answer the admittedly difficult questions she has posed: Just who was Diana, and what did she signify? What was behind the extraordinary reaction to her death, and to what extent does that emotion linger, 10 years after her awful end?

The Lives of the Poets

by Samuel Johnson; edited by Roger Lonsdale (Oxford)

In his trenchant critical biographies of 52 17th- and 18th-century poets, Samuel Johnson assessed the characters and creations of the great (Milton, Dryden,

Swift, Pope) and the now-all-but-forgotten (see his sweetly gallant defense of his friend, the fraud and inveterate sponger Richard Savage). True, Johnson's judgment can be wacky—he pronounces Milton's "Lycidas" "easy, vulgar, and therefore disgusting." But his writing—with its offhandedly authoritative tone—is so consistently felicitous that it almost doesn't matter what he says. Now these masterpieces have a worthy scholarly edition. Lonsdale's exhaustive notes and commentary and his stylish, penetrating introduction place the work in its historical and literary context. But more than that, they're profoundly and truly illuminating—it's impossible to imagine future readers absorbing Johnson's work without Lonsdale's insights and revelations.

Public Cowboy No. 1:**The Life and Times of Gene Autry**

by Holly George-Warren (Oxford)

Autry, the entertainment quintuple threat (five stars on the Hollywood Walk of Fame) whose sweetness, swagger, and "chameleonic artistry" helped him overcome his hardscrabble origins and influence a generation, married Wild West tropes to vaudeville sensibilities and thus helped bridge the pop-culture divide of the 19th and 20th centuries. Along the way, he served in a world war, hobnobbed with presidents, bought a Major League Baseball team, and amassed a fortune; yet alcohol and infidelity dogged his progress. This is a thorough, no-nonsense account of a singular life, and the prolific music writer George-Warren employs a brisk, assured style that hews to the Cowboy Code.

Circling My Mother: A Memoir

by Mary Gordon (Pantheon)

Approaching her mother from many angles—via her work, her sisters, her husband, her love of singing, her friends, her priests—but filtering all through the lens of a daughter's memory, Gordon assembles a collage-like portrait that is at once a particular and moving story of one woman's life and a sketch of an American Catholic working-class experience over the course of the 20th century. Gordon, supremely skilled at both rendering a scene with vivid immediacy and extracting significance from it, writes with irresistible intelligence and honesty.

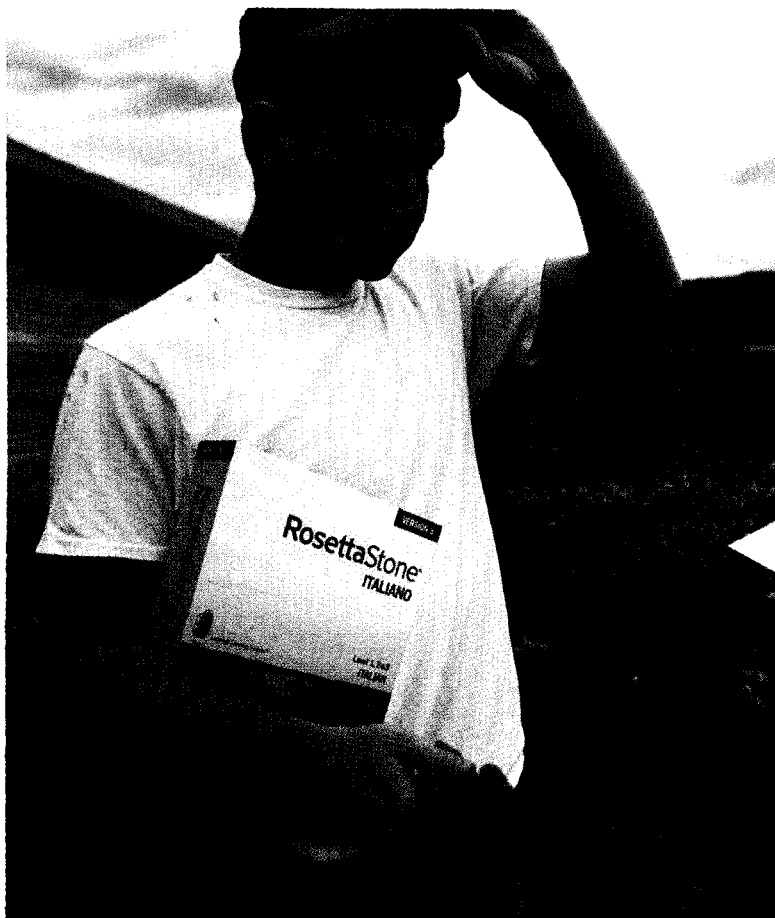
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TRAVELS

Old hippies and New Agers commune along the shores of Guatemala's Lake Atitlán.

The Grateful Living

BY WAYNE CURTIS

When I left Lake Atitlán in the Guatemalan highlands some 25 years ago, I was in the back of a van sitting atop a bale of kaleidoscopically patterned shirts and skirts. I was sharing the ride with a guy named Lucky, who was planning to fly with his cargo to Philadelphia, where the Grateful Dead would be playing in a few days. It was what Lucky did: He flew to Guatemala every month or two, stocked up, then flew back to set up shop outside Dead shows.

I was a recent college graduate, and Lucky had inspired me to launch my own business. So I was traveling with a duffel full of brightly colored woven wallets, which I intended to sell on college campuses. As the van labored up the winding road from the lake, I looked out the rear window toward the silvery-blue water

hundreds of feet below. The view was heart-stoppingly beautiful, and I was in a buoyant mood. I knew I'd be returning soon to buy more wallets; the lake would be my second home. Like Lucky, I would keep on trucking.

As it happened, more than two decades would pass before I made it back, wiser for my years. Among the bits of wisdom I'd acquired: The demand for colorful cloth wallets is not without limits. And when I did return, curious about what had become of the hippies and Deadheads, I discovered that the gateway town of Panajachel, which I recalled as a sort of countercultural Shangri-La in a nation racked by civil war, had more or less vanished. It was now a bustling mini-metropolis of speeding tuk-tuks driven by teenage Indians, some of whom wore

wireless-cell-phone earpieces. Hardly any tie-dye was to be found.

I walked down to the new cobblestone promenade along the lake. The view across the water was as breathtaking as ever: Three improbably symmetrical volcanoes anchor the far shore, and the rest of the lake is rimmed by high escarpments irregularly tattooed with nearly vertical cornfields. At the main pier, boatmen were hawking tours of the shorefront villages. I asked one guide what there was to see. "Indios. Indios," he told me, making a wide sweep of his arm. Then he gestured toward the villages of San Pedro La Laguna and San

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slideshow of Guatemala, visit
www.theatlantic.com/atitlan.



THE TRAVEL ADVISORY

Guatemala City can be reached via direct flights from several North American cities, and inexpensive shuttles depart frequently from its airport to Panajachel (the trip takes about four hours). To arrange for pickup at the airport, try www.transportguatemala.com/sta.htm.

Crime against tourists is not unknown in Guatemala, but most visitors enjoy uneventful stays. The U.S. State Department suggests certain cautions (e.g., "Avoid gatherings of agitated people") but no longer includes the country on its travel-warnings list.

What to do

In San Pedro, visitors can rent kayaks and paddle to San Marcos for lunch, or hire a guide for a hike to the top of an inactive volcano with memorable views. Boats depart regularly for Santiago Atitlán, a lively Mayan town with a Friday market and an obscure cult built around a cigar-smoking saint named Maximón.

San Marcos has a surfeit of activities for those in pursuit of a healthy lifestyle, from hour-long hot-stone massages to month-long classes in tarot reading. All are easy to find just by wandering the pathways.

Also recommended are one-on-one Spanish lessons: In both villages you often hear conjugating going on behind bamboo fences. San Pedro has several schools, among them the Flor del Maiz (www.flordelmaiz.com) and the Atitlán Spanish School (www.geocities.com/atitlanschool). In San Marcos, if you put the word out that you're looking for a tutor, one will find you quickly.

Where to stay

In the smaller villages, hotel rooms can be had for under \$10 a night, and

very few cost more than \$50. Of course, accommodations at these prices tend toward the simple and rustic. You might consider bringing a clip-on book light or a 75-watt bulb.

ZooLa (zoolapeople@gmail.com) has eight small, sparsely furnished rooms for just a few dollars a night (half have private baths), and two common-area thatched-roof pavilions.

Posada Schumann, in San Marcos (www.posadaschumann.com), just up the shore from the boat landing, features a dozen comfortable stone cabins. For about \$25, you can get an attractive room, continental breakfast, and the use of kayaks and a sauna.

Staying at **Hotel Aaculaax** (www.aaculaax.com) is like living in a vast artwork. It has six rooms, including two suites, all with private baths. In recent years, it has morphed from a budget hotel into a somewhat fancier establishment; suites now command \$66 a night. The three-story Mirador suite is almost constantly booked; reserving ahead is essential.

Where to eat

One of the most popular hangouts in San Pedro is **D'Noz**, with a spacious restaurant and terrace overlooking the dock, a jukebox with hundreds of selections, free movies each evening, and a top-floor Internet café. Meals include quiche, salads, and curries; the fresh juices are especially good.

In San Marcos, the **Moonfish Cafe** serves organic foods, including superb whole-grain pancakes with fresh melon and local honey.

Also in San Marcos, **Las Pirámides** serves wonderfully prepared vegetarian food inside a small, pleasant restaurant and at outdoor tables under banana, palm, and evergreen trees.

Marcos La Laguna. "Hee-pees. Hee-pees," he said. I caught a launch to San Pedro the next morning.

Lake Atitlán is six miles across at its widest and at least a thousand feet deep. The area was populated chiefly by Indian subsistence farmers until the first road to the lake was built, in the 1940s. Travelers soon started to make their way there. Efforts to create a Cancún of the mountains failed, and instead Panajachel emerged as a stop on the budget-travel circuit. Even during the worst of the fighting, a polyglot crew of long-haired, consciousness-altering proto-slackers, myself among them, were drawn by the cheap hotels and restaurants, the abundance of exportable products, and the quasi-psychedelic Indian vibe.

Visiting one of the villages across the lake years ago—chasing ill-founded rumors of cheap wallets—I had found an eerily remote town where kids ran and hid from strangers. When I disembarked at San Pedro on this recent morning, I realized that it had undergone a sort of bohemian-colonialist transformation. The dock was flanked by restaurants blooming with colorful café umbrellas, and the sound of techno music wafted down the hill. At the top of the steep cobblestone street that leads up from the water was a sign with the iconic red circle and slash superimposed on a drum (the hippies apparently used to gather and drum here). Nearby, a man in a cowboy hat muttered, "Weed. Smoke. Weed," and a man with no hat said, "Nice weed. Smoke." Someone handed me a flyer for the upcoming "Mayan Experience Psychedelic Trance & Dance."

The pot-smoking hippies share the village with profoundly evangelical Indians (some of whom appeared horrified by the hippies' lack of hygiene). Over-amplified church services echo around the town, and signs instructing one to follow the Lord are painted on walls everywhere. (Among them: *JESUS ES EL CAMINO*, which I couldn't help visualizing in automotive terms.) Yet the hippies and the Indians have evidently achieved a détente, predicated on an intricate microeconomy of beer, laundry, tortillas, and Spanish lessons.

I spent a large portion of my time in San Pedro at ZooLa, a rustic restaurant-and-hotel compound overlooking the lake. It consists of a series of open-air thatched huts, the main one arrayed with woven grass mats and large, brightly colored pillows. It was hand-built by an Israeli couple who wanted their guests to be able to “lie about like Bedouins.” And lie about I did, admiring the views, sipping mint tea, and chatting with fellow travelers. Most had the enviable confidence of people who’ve rejected something (wage slavery, confining shoes) and are pleased to tell you about it. I found that being among hippies still relaxes me—my hair feels cleaner, my limited life ambitions recklessly grandiose. It was hard to leave.

I eventually decamped for San Marcos, 10 minutes by boat across the bay. If San Pedro is Haight-Ashbury circa 1968, San Marcos is Marin County circa 1975. The ancient hippie colony of Panajachel had, in effect, split into two tribes, with the pot smokers heading to one village and the New Agers to the other.

The lower part of San Marcos, nearest the lake, is occupied chiefly by gringos in the pursuit of wholeness. At Centro Jazmín, you can get a Taoist healing massage (“recommended only for people who are very in tune with their internal energies”). At the San Marcos Holistic Centre, you can sign up for an Indian head massage (“helps with ‘backpack-induced’ shoulder pain”). At Centro de Meditación Las Pirámides, you can take a month-long “Moon-course” (includes “showers with medicinal plants”) while living in a pyramid-shaped hut.

Yet I found that you needn’t feel unwhole to enjoy a few days here. It’s easy to fill one’s days with eating, swimming, and lounging about, and there’s no activities director to make you feel like a loser for not participating in forced amusements. The lake is an ideal temperature for swimming, and you can jump off rocks or wade in through marshy grasses near the west end of town.

And idly exploring is a delight. The village is not so much human-scaled as hobbit-scaled; the lower part is a labyrinth

of footpaths lined with bamboo and stucco walls, the main intersections dotted with bouquets of hand-painted signs directing you to organic restaurants and holistic centers. The hotels tend to be cozy and informal. My favorite—a place that alone nearly merits a trip to Central America—is Aaculaax, a six-room hotel built by a young German named Nicolas Gronau. A former record-store manager from Hamburg, Gronau first visited San Marco in 1999. He returned the next year, bought land, and began to cobble together a miniature village of narrow pathways, lush foliage, and folk-art buildings unfamiliar with right angles. Most striking of all is a three-story suite that’s partly carved into a cliff and has an outdoor bathroom with

green building. He started thinking there had to be a way to get rid of the garbage that threatened to engulf San Marcos like an implacable polystyrene glacier. (There’s no central trash collection; most residents dig pits and bury their bottles and bags.) He decided to use the plastic to make buildings. For some walls, he strung two lengths of chicken wire between stout concrete posts, then packed the gap with trash and slathered it with cement. He made other walls of empty glass bottles stacked and cemented into place, their tops and bottoms exposed. These look like wine racks excavated from Pompeii, and a lambent, jade-colored light gently decants into the guest rooms.



an astonishing view of the lake and its volcanoes. The room is like something from a fable (though I wouldn’t recommend it to acrophobes or building engineers).

The whole complex has a supple, organic feel, the sort that architects often strive for but rarely achieve. In this instance, it was achieved because when Gronau started building, he had no idea what he wanted to create. First he made a house for himself; when he discovered he had money left over, he kept going, eventually deciding on a hotel. With a crew of local craftsmen, he added structures here and there as whim dictated. “We tried to build one building off a blueprint,” he told me. “The guys just looked at me like I was completely mad.”

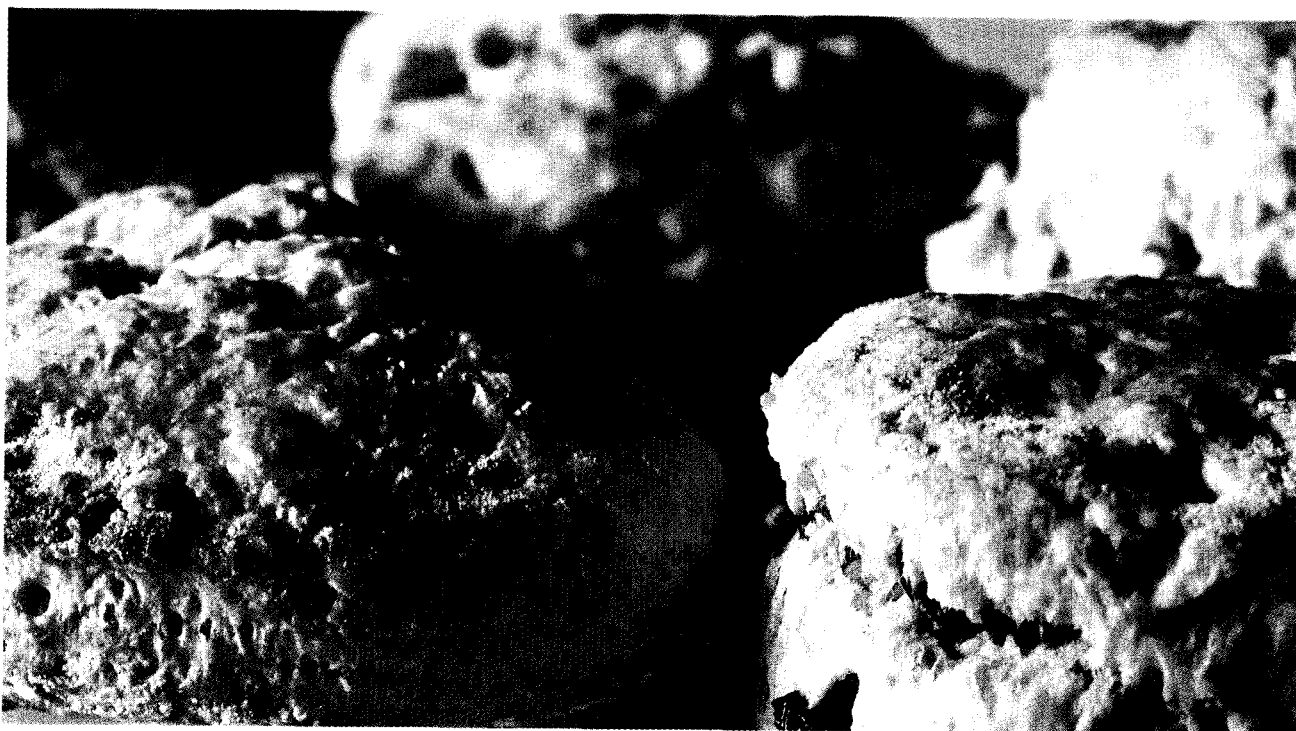
In keeping with the town’s holistic bent, Gronau became an advocate for

Gronau often provides lodging to artists in exchange for their creativity, and some 150 have added their sculptures and paintings to the grounds. Some artists even become part of the landscape. Alain Galtier, a Frenchman with a splendid gray beard and a Gandalfian air, has occupied an open-air workshop here for the last five years, making stained-glass-and-papier-mâché windows and lamps for the hotel.

When I stopped at Galtier’s studio on my last day, I pointed to a couple of lamps and asked how much they cost. He was cool to my inquiry, informing me that they were not for sale.

Which is a shame. I’m pretty sure I could make good money exporting them to the States. ▀

Wayne Curtis is a frequent contributor to *The Atlantic*.



FOOD

At Camp Bread, in San Francisco, a baker rehabilitates one of the most frequently abused members of the pastry family.

The Secret of the Irish Scone

BY CORBY KUMMER

At summer's start the Bread Bakers Guild, a society of American artisan bakers, staged Camp Bread, a three-day jamboree of classes and visits to bakeries, restaurants, and flour mills in the Bay Area. The event, only in its second year, sold out the day it was posted on the group's Web site. This year, I was able to wangle a visitor's pass for a day and a half. I wanted to be everywhere at once, with so many concurrent classes taking place at the San Francisco Baking Institute, which served as base camp.

Bakers are the most generous of people. Like cooks these days, many have come to their craft as a second career and approach it with special passion. And they happily share their secrets. My neighborhood bakery, Clear Flour, in Brookline, Massachusetts, whose co-owner,

Abe Faber, is the director of Camp Bread, sells little hatted rolls that look like Le Corbusier's church at Ronchamps. I saw French bakers teaching the technique at Camp Bread. Faber's wife, Christy, helped teach a class on buttery "enriched" doughs (she is a master of brioche) and came home with a recipe for something I'd like to see in every artisan bakery in the land: fresh German pretzels.

I sat in on an all-day seminar on "Irish Ethnic Baking"—an underappreciated discipline, according to one of the instructors, Derek O'Brien, head of Dublin's National Bakery School, who led us through the postwar demise and encouraging current revival of the High Street baker.

Jimmy Griffin, a jovial young fourth-generation baker from Galway, kept

surprising us with breads well outside the standard repertoire even of Boston's Irish bakeries. Most dramatic was "batch bread," the rough equivalent of the French *pain de mie*—a tight-textured white bread enriched with butter and often milk. The balls of dough are placed side by side in an oversize rectangular pan at least 6 inches deep (Griffin lugged a wooden frame he'd built to bake them in; amazingly, it didn't catch fire in the oven). Each one becomes a pull-apart square loaf a full 8 inches high, with a dark and shiny domed top and no crust on the sides. It was disconcerting to think that this beautiful sandwich bread, soft and pliant but strong, gave rise to Wonder Bread and the English equivalent, the yet-more-Orwellian Mothers Pride, and to the big commercial bakeries

that nearly drove Irish artisan bakers out of business.

There was soda bread, of course, that soft, sweetly nutty excuse for endless amounts of butter and the best possible accompaniment for cheddar or smoked salmon. I can eat soda bread in virtually unlimited quantities, but it's a terrific challenge to make here, where the available whole-wheat flour produces harsh, tough results. Irish "brown" flour is much "weaker" (lower in gluten) than American whole-wheat flour—good for the delicate texture of Irish brown bread and for pastry, but not so good for yeast breads. Nothing in America is quite like it.

Determined to learn how to make Griffin's soda bread, a family recipe and a signature of his bakery, I took technical notes on the protein and bran levels of the flour he had brought from Ireland. Maggie Glezer, the author of several books on artisanal baking, who was taking a break from preparations for her own class, was equally focused. But every time we asked just which flours Griffin recommended and in what proportions, we seemed to end up with slightly different protein and bran ratios. I gave up and resolved to order another shipment of Odlums soda-bread mix from Ireland.

At the end of the afternoon, Griffin threw in a bonus recipe he hadn't put in his handouts: raspberry-and-raisin tea scones. They sounded dainty and dull after the gorgeous trays of hot cross buns and the Celtic whiskey brack, a buttery yeasted cake crammed with whiskey-macerated fruit whose mixing was halted for a spontaneous round of shots of Jameson's. Instead they were a revelation.

Scones are among the pastry family's most frequently abused members. Even in England, which you might think would be the home of the tenderest and best, the average scone is a dense and powdery affair, with only a few sad raisins to relieve the monotony—unless, of course, you slather it with clotted cream and Tiptree's Little Scarlet Strawberry Preserves, which would make anything taste good. *Scone* is a Scottish word derived from the Dutch *schoonbrot*,

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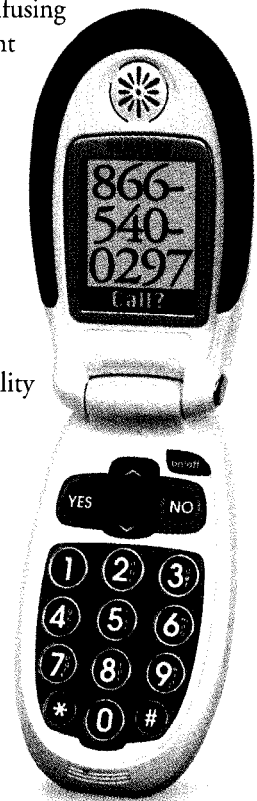
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IN AND
OVER SCONES

The Crumpet Shop, at the entrance of the Pike Place Market, in Seattle, makes the most authentic and best scone I know in the country—baked as a 3-inch-high round cake and served in wedges, with the light, moist, open-pored texture of a quick bread and a buttery color and flavor. You can buy a whole “cake” fresh and take it home, but the shop doesn’t do mail order, and it closes when it runs out of crumpets (big, yeasty English muffins) and scones, which is always about 90 seconds before you get there (1503 First Avenue, Seattle, WA 98101, 206-682-1598).

If you’re looking for a classic American-style scone—which is to say a buttery, somewhat flaky cross between a biscuit and a shortcake—look no farther than **Concord Teacakes**, a company the baker Judy Fersch built on her light hand for pastry. They arrive fresh, with or without currants or cinnamon chips (www.concordteacakes.com, 978-369-7644).

For my money, **Katz and Company** makes the best jams in the country. Its unquestioned stars are apricot and raspberry, which sell out practically before the crops come in. You’ll have better luck with the strawberry, with lots of fat strawberry chunks, for a couple of months at least (www.katzandco.com, 800-676-7176).

If you can’t find imported clotted cream, stick with the superior crème fraîche from **Vermont Butter & Cheese Company**—not quite as thick, and decidedly more tart, but as luscious as any English gentleperson could wish, especially muddled with fruit preserves. Allison Hooper, the company’s co-founder, also makes an excellent cultured butter—meaning butter with actual flavor—that would be great over hot scones. Now if she’d only sell buttermilk to go into them (www.vtbutterandcheeseco.com, 800-884-6287).

which in turn comes from the German *schönbrot*. A startling number of the ones I tried on a recent trip to London were hardly *schön*—they resembled fatty fieldstones. What you usually find masquerading as scones in this country might better be called by the name of another British treat: rock cakes.

Griffin’s scones are so light and moist that they fall between cake and a well-made muffin. They are easy to mix and bake very, very quickly. And they neatly avoid many scone pitfalls.

The trick to making scones—or pie crust, or shortbread, or any other dough that is supposed to be flaky—is to work the fat (butter for scones, lard for the best biscuits and pie crust) into the flour with your fingers, or a pair of table knives, until it forms cornmeal-like crumbs and then to knead the dough practically by stealth. The best bakers have cold, nimble fingers and what Shirley Corriher, an Atlanta cooking teacher and writer, calls a “touch of grace.” Inspired by her grandmother’s legendary biscuits, Corriher embarked on a career of scientific inquiry that led to *CookWise*, an essential manual for technical-minded cooks. She uses shortening (easier to work than butter) and makes her dough very wet, which always results in lighter breads.

Griffin eliminates the mixing challenge altogether by using liquid fat, in this case olive oil. What could be more healthful? If you pick a light olive oil (I used Olave, from Chile, well made and neutral), no one will guess it’s there. He also adds an egg, which few other scone makers do; this makes the wet dough easy to pat into shape.

There are no tricks to making Griffin’s scones, in fact, except for buying frozen raspberries and finding buttermilk. (Nothing is better for baking than true buttermilk, which is left over from making cultured butter, but no artisan dairy I know of sells it.) You can eliminate the raspberries if you like, but they add a nice lightening touch and are easier to use than fresh berries, which would fall apart and stain the scones.

For 12 to 15 scones, heat the oven to 500 degrees (yes, that high) and place the

rack in the middle. Combine 2¾ cups of all-purpose white flour with 2 teaspoons of baking powder and half a teaspoon of salt. If you can find White Lily brand flour, low in protein and thus in gluten, which toughens delicate pastry, use it (White Lily is the secret to Corriher’s biscuits). Otherwise, choose the white flour with the lowest percentage of protein on the nutritional information chart—but don’t use cake flour, which is cut with glutenless cornstarch. Griffin blends 1¼ cups white flour to 1 cup of pastry flour, but few supermarkets carry pastry flour. (Arrowhead Mills’ “pastry flour,” which you can find at Whole Foods, is whole-grain flour from soft wheat; it is a nice and nutty alternative, but makes a drier scone.) To help achieve that very light texture, sift the flour mixture five times—this doesn’t take as long as it sounds—and set it aside in a large mixing bowl.

In another bowl, whisk together 1 cup of buttermilk, ½ cup of olive oil, ½ cup of sugar, and 1 egg. It’s important to have everything ready to go before you mix the liquid into the flour, as this starts activating the baking powder. In separate containers, measure ½ cup of raisins and ½ cup of frozen raspberries without syrup. (If you prefer to buy fresh berries, freeze them on a baking sheet and then store them in a bag.)

Oil or butter a cookie sheet, or cut a piece of parchment paper to fit it. I managed to make all the scones fit onto a standard 13-by-15 sheet, but a bigger one would be better. Uncushioned baking sheets will make browner bottoms. Have ready a biscuit cutter or jar 3 inches in diameter (for a dozen scones) or 2½ inches in diameter (for 15), and about ½ cup of flour in a bowl. Whisk two eggs with a pinch of salt in another bowl, to glaze the cut biscuits, and dig out a pastry brush if you have one.

Make a well in the middle of the sifted flour, pour in the milk-oil mixture, and sprinkle the raisins on top. Blend the flour into the liquid-raisin mixture with a wooden spoon, working from the inside out and mixing as lightly as you can. The dough will come together easily and

quickly. Turn it out onto a large sheet of waxed paper and cover it with another, so that you can pat it into a rough rectangle an inch high; it should measure roughly 8 by 10 inches.

Remove the top sheet, scatter the frozen raspberries over half of the rectangle (try to break them into individual berries as you work), and fold over the other half. Cover with waxed paper again and roll or pat the rectangle until it is an even 1½ inches high. Remove the top sheet and cut the dough into rounds with clean strokes, dipping the cutter into flour between cuts. Transfer the biscuits onto the baking sheet with a table knife or offset spatula dipped in flour, spacing them 1½ to 2 inches apart. You can pat the scraps together into messy rounds and even them out with the cutter. Glaze the tops with the beaten egg mixture, and slide the finished tray into the refrigerator for 15 minutes or the freezer for 10 minutes; glaze the scones again.

Put the tray in the oven and turn the temperature down to 425 degrees. Bake for 15 minutes for 2½-inch biscuits or 18 minutes for 3-inch biscuits. Resist the urge to cook them longer, even though the tops only start to get shiny and brown in the last few minutes of baking. (Griffin recommended 10 minutes, but he had in mind commercial ovens, which hold heat more evenly; I put the light-bottomed scones back into the oven for five minutes, and it was a mistake.) Cool them on the baking sheet for 10 minutes, which will allow the bottoms to finish browning, and then transfer to a cooling rack.

The scones will stay moist for about two days, and can be toasted without toughening. They freeze well, too. As always with light breads (and English muffins, which are really crumpets), it's better to split them with a fork; this preserves their lovely texture and reads them to absorb soft butter and jam. Even if you've never made pastry, your friends will marvel at your dab hand and beg you to make clotted cream. I've heard that it's easy. Me, I'm waiting for Camp Cream. ■

Corby Kummer is an Atlantic senior editor.

Innovative Safety Technology

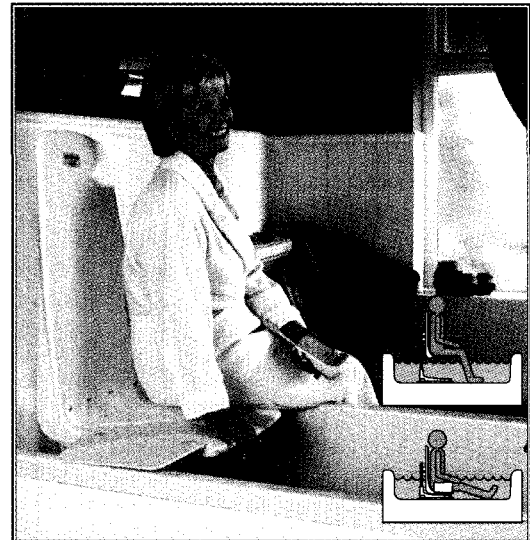
Are you missing the luxury of warm, relaxing baths? Well, grab your towel!

By John Fleming

For many of us, nothing is more relaxing than a long, luxurious bath. Unfortunately, because of safety concerns, many people, particularly older people, have to forego this simple pleasure. Sure, you can spend big bucks to remodel your bathroom to provide a bathtub you can use, but who wants to do that? Now there's a better way, and it lets you use the bath that's in your home today.

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CULTURE AND COMMERCE

On television shows like *CSI* and *Numb3rs*, scientists are still weird—but a geeky glamour has replaced the old stereotypes.

Beautiful Minds

BY VIRGINIA POSTREL

Even before Sputnik, scientists and policy makers worried that not enough Americans were studying science. In August 1957, two months before the Soviets launched their satellite, *Science* magazine published a survey of high-school students' images of scientists, conducted by Margaret Mead (yes, that one) and Rhoda Métraux. Students, they found, thought scientists were important. "Without science we would still be living in caves," was a common sentiment. But they didn't want to become scientists or (a question asked only of girls) to marry one. Scientists were just too weird.

A common pattern emerged from seemingly inconsistent descriptions:

The number of ways in which the image of the scientist contains extremes which appear to be contradictory—too much contact with money or too little; being bald or bearded; confined to work indoors, or traveling far away; talking all the time in a boring way, or never talking at all—all represent deviations from the accepted way of life, from being a normal friendly human being, who lives like other people and gets along with other people.

A lot has changed in the past 50 years, but the stereotypes remain. Scientists in the movies, noted a 1998 study in *The Sciences*, tend to "have two personality traits in common: obsessive natures and brilliant minds." Their detached objectivity makes them "dangerously compartmentalized and blind to frailty and emotion." Scientists appear most often in horror movies. Through childlike curiosity or God-defying hubris, they unleash destructive forces they can't control—*Forbidden Planet's* Monsters of the Id.



OBSESSIVE: *CSI's* Gil Grissom at work

In works from *Faust* to *Frankenstein* to *The Fly*, scientific wonder quickly morphs into horror, turning desire into revulsion, as the scientist's beautiful illusion bursts into a nightmarish new reality. In the novel, Victor Frankenstein recalls the transformation:

Now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart. Unable to endure the aspect of the being I had created, I rushed out of the room, and continued a long time traversing my bedchamber, unable to compose my mind to sleep.

Frankenstein did not invent the fear of science; the novel found its audience because it dramatized anxieties that already existed. Although popular entertainment can, over the long run, shape public perceptions, it becomes popular in the first place only if it addresses pre-existing hopes, fears, and fascinations.

That makes the extraordinary success of *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*, which

begins its eighth season this month, all the more remarkable. Unlike its direct spin-offs and numerous imitators, which are more-conventional cop melodramas, the original *CSI* has at its core an eccentric scientist: obsessive, brilliant, objective, and self-contained. "Oh, I have outlets," says Gil Grissom. "I read. I study bugs. I sometimes even ride roller coasters." What a nerd.

CSI has not only remained a top-rated show through seven seasons; it has had real-world consequences. Police and prosecutors complain of a "CSI effect" that leads juries to demand more physical evidence than they used to expect. College officials use the same term to describe spiking enrollment in forensic-science programs.

CSI's success also fostered a less-probable hit: *Numb3rs*, beginning its fourth season, the first detective show featuring a math prodigy as hero and algorithms as high-tech weapons. Enthusiastically accepting the pitch for *Numb3rs*, a studio

executive declared, "This show will do for math what *CSI* has done for science."

What these shows have done is to make science and math alluring—without invoking an imagined future, an alternative reality, or travel to distant worlds. The characters live and work in recognizable, realistic versions of contemporary Las Vegas and Pasadena. The shows invent no new physics or biology and posit no conspiracies hiding alien invasions or ancient space technologies; they seem to portray science as it really exists.

Of course, the glamour is an illusion. The TV scientists are unusually good-looking and well-dressed, and their techniques and equipment are more varied and efficient than the real world allows. A real Charlie Eppes, the math whiz on *Numb3rs*, wouldn't use a different algorithm for every problem, and he'd require more data than the scripts often give him. Real crime-scene investigation is less dramatically lit and much more tedious than the TV version. "My job at the FBI was looking through the microscope for five hours a day or so, five days a week," says Max Houck, now the director of West Virginia University's Forensic Science Initiative. He spent the rest of his time on paperwork and phone calls, including two weeks cold-calling manufacturers to track down the origins of a single fiber. Not exactly the stuff of great television.

But all TV dramas gloss over the boring aspects of professional life, as any lawyer, cop, doctor, or journalist can testify. They edit out the distracting details (even if, as in *CSI*, they leave in some blood and guts) to create an idealized world into which the audience can project itself. The question is why so many people find these particular portraits compelling.

The answer, most obviously, is that *CSI* and *Numb3rs* align scientific curiosity with justice. Science, they promise, will judge fairly. It will not be warped by politics or public opinion. By pursuing and revealing the truth without prejudice, it will protect the innocent. The shows do more than repeat the traditional portrait of the Sherlock Holmesian scientific detective, who identifies the guilty and restores the social order.

Science here speaks for the victim and also for the wrongly accused. Scientists use their power—and their fearless willingness to deviate from the norm—in the service of the powerless.

In an early *CSI* episode, Grissom reexamines the evidence in an arson case, responding to a plea from a prisoner who maintains his innocence. His day-shift counterpart, Conrad Ecklie, who first handled the case, objects.

GRISSOM: What are you so afraid of, Conrad? We're just a couple of science geeks. Why can't we work together?

ECKLIE: No. We are public servants. We investigate cases as efficiently as we can, and then we move on. We're not a clearinghouse for defendants on the eve of trial who don't like what we've turned up.

GRISSOM: Yes we are, if it's our mistake that put them there.

The accused arsonist is in fact innocent. The fire was an accident.

Even science for the sake of science may vindicate the wrongly accused. In a *Numb3rs* episode centered on sabermetrics, the mathematical analysis of baseball statistics, Charlie's physicist friend Larry, the show's quintessential science nerd, notes that "in a 1993 article in *The American Statistician*, J. Bennett, using sabermetrics, analyzed 'Shoeless Joe' Jackson's career. He was able to prove that Jackson played up to his full potential in every one of the 1919 'Black Sox' series," which Jackson was accused of throwing. "Math restored a man's good name and reputation after 70 years. I find that rather beautiful." Science, these shows promise, will see you—innocent or guilty—for who you really are. (*CSI*'s theme song is the Who's "Who Are You.")

Instead of alienating scientists from the rest of humanity, the eccentricity of people like Grissom and Charlie makes them more perceptive and, in many cases, more empathetic. They are not easily deceived by artifice and appearance. Charlie's special gift is to perceive patterns others miss. Grissom's is to view nothing human as alien—a profound difference from Victor Frankenstein's disgust at his creature's ugly visage.

A recurring theme on *CSI* is the contrast between Grissom's humane, scientifically informed objectivity and the horror and hatred that less-rational people find in the "deviations from the accepted way of life," whether transgendered people or Buddhist monks. "What people will endure to be normal," Grissom sighs, as the medical examiner explains the painful bone-lengthening procedures evident in the legs of a murdered dwarf. Two episodes of the show have featured murders committed by relatives—a father and a brother—to stop young women from marrying genetic "freaks," the dwarf and a man with congenital hypertrichosis, or "werewolf syndrome," which causes thick hair to grow everywhere on his body. To the scientist's eye, cruelty, not deformity, defines the monsters among us.

Rather than releasing the Monsters of the Id, science provides a bulwark against them. "You spend your life uncovering what goes on beneath the surface of civility and acceptable behavior," the insightful dominatrix Lady Heather tells Grissom in the first of her recurring appearances, "so it's a release for you to indulge in something like high tea, where it seems, if only for a moment, the world really is civilized." People don't need science or advanced technology to do terrible things to each other.

The scientist heroes of past dramas were mostly medical researchers, saving lives with new cures, or explorers, seeking out new frontiers. Their science was the science of power, freedom, and escape—with all the dangers those entail. Closely allied to technology, their science reshaped physical reality. Today's heroes emphasize not power and control but understanding and insight. Against the normal impulses of jealousy and rage, hatred and shame, the cool deviance of scientific objectivity offers a chance for truth, justice, and sympathy. These scientists are still weird. But they're also good—a new version of the stereotype, and a hopeful one. ▀

Virginia Postrel is an *Atlantic* contributing editor and the author of *The Substance of Style* (2003) and *The Future and Its Enemies* (1998). Her blog, the Dynamist, can be found at www.dynamist.com/weblog.

CONTENT

The unbearable lightness of Ira Glass, Wes Anderson, and other paragons of indie sensibility

Quirked Around

BY MICHAEL HIRSCHORN

We're drowning in quirk. It is the ruling sensibility of today's Gen-X indie culture, defined territorially by the gentle ministrations of public radio's *This American Life*; the strenuously odd (and now canceled) TV sitcom *Arrested Development*; the movies of Wes Anderson; Dave Eggers's *McSweeney's* Web site; the performance art, music, and writing of Miranda July; and the just-too-wacky-to-be-fully-believable memoirs of Augusten Burroughs.

It's been 20 years of beneficent, wide-eyed gazing upon the oddities of our fellow man. David Byrne probably birthed contemporary quirk around 1985—halfway between his “Psycho Killer” beginnings with the Talking Heads and his move to global pop—when he sang the song “Stay Up Late”: “Cute, cute, little baby / Little pee-pee, little toes.” (As it happens, Byrne appeared on July's recent book tour.) Jon Cryer's “Duckie” Dale in *Pretty in Pink* came a year later, and quirk was on its way.

As an aesthetic principle, quirk is an embrace of the odd against the blandly mainstream. It features mannered ingenuousness, an embrace of small moments, narrative randomness, situationally amusing but not hilarious character juxtapositions (on HBO's recent indie-cred comedy *Flight of the Conchords*, the titular folk-rock duo have one fan), and unexplainable but nonetheless charming character traits. Quirk takes not mattering very seriously.

Quirk is odd, but not *too* odd. That would take us all the way to *weird*, and there someone might get hurt. *Napoleon Dynamite* became a quirk classic by making heroes of Napoleon and Pedro, boy-men without qualities who team up



against an alpha blonde to elect Mexican-immigrant Pedro class president at an Idaho high school. Napoleon seals the deal with a dance so transfixingly, transportingly wrong that it becomes a kind of *deus ex machina*. Pedro wins. (Indeed, inappropriate dancing is a big quirk trope, inasmuch as it provides a dramatic moment at which value systems can collide. See, for example, 7-year-old Olive's unwittingly hypersexualized routine to Rick James's “Super Freak”

that brings the dysfunctional family together in last year's *Little Miss Sunshine*. This itself called out to the unwittingly only-slightly-less-hypersexualized preteen dance troupe Sparkle Motion in the 2001 quirk-noir *Donnie Darko*, a movie in which Jake Gyllenhaal takes orders from a giant rabbit.)

In *Garden State*, Zach Braff's generation-defining 2004 movie about 20-something adult-onset agita, quirky Sam (Natalie Portman) shepherds sullen,

affectless Andrew (Braff) off the well-trodden path of bourgeois conformity onto the slightly-less-trodden-upon fescue along the side of the road. After burying her pet hamster, they end up at a houseboat situated at the lip of a New-ark quarry, where the inhabitants happen to be antique dealers. Random. The antique dealers have a piece of jewelry that belonged to Andrew's dead mother. Andrew finds newfound purpose in life—purpose-lite, really.

The avatar of contemporary quirk is undoubtedly Ira Glass, the 40-something host of the long-running radio show *This American Life*, which recently completed its first season as a documentary series on Showtime. The TV show hews closely to the radio format (full disclosure: two of its executive producers are working with me on another project). Glass introduces each episode of the TV version from behind a deco desk placed somewhere nonsensical, like a parking garage or the Utah salt flats. It's a wryly funny visual gag: Throwback to older medium introduces TV show as if he's come from the first days of TV.

Famously, the radio show tells multiple stories around a theme, with Glass, the pleasantly nasal narrator, gently prodding the action along and summing it up in ways that correct yet almost always redeem the people—white and middle-class, to a disconcerting degree—who populate his stories. "Ours really is a ministry of love," Glass told *Entertainment Weekly* earlier this year, in that non-ironic ironic way favored by the self-styledly quirky.

It's easy to fall in with *TAL*. The rhythms are lulling, and everyone involved appears to be—is—smart, idiosyncratic, charmingly self-effacing, well-meaning, much as most of us would like to be seen. Glass tells stories, and who does that anymore? The radio show has birthed and nurtured a slew of alt-culture stars (John Hodgman, Sarah Vowell, David Sedaris), and it thrives as the voice of a generation too young to buy into the broader public-radio mission ("This is the sound of Guatemalan basket weavers; their way of life is

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AN58

threatened ...”) and too smart or old for the braying of commercial radio. It’s the sound of Austin, Boulder, Berkeley, Red Hook, Madison, Cambridge, Adams Morgan—of people who tend to think of themselves as *engaged, aware*.

TAL, as has been apparent for years, is really the opposite of documentary reportage. It’s more like sociology, wherein the paradigm is set and specific circumstances are nipped, tucked, torqued, and squeezed until they fit the theme. Radio listeners can’t really fight through Glass’s scrim, so they have to take his word that the story is what he says it is. In the harsh light of television, however, the affections of the radio show become glaringly clear. You can see how determined Glass is to bestow small breakthrough moments on his protagonists, whether they’re aware of them or not. We’re told, for instance, that the religious father of a lapsed-Mormon woman has come to a tentative understanding with his daughter after seeing her boyfriend play Jesus in a photo shoot. But mostly, she still just seems pissed off, and he remains a doctrinaire bore. Then there’s the rancher who loves his one-of-a-kind, tourist-attracting bull (“Chance”) so much that he clones him (creating “Second Chance”). The man is said to have learned a gentle lesson about unintended consequences after the clone gores him in the testicles. But actually he doesn’t seem to have learned much of anything. He still believes Second Chance will be bankable, once the bull gets the testicle-goring out of his system. Mostly, the rancher seems either economically needy or a bit touched.

In a short introductory piece, an elderly guy who visits his wife’s grave three times a week, but also brings along a TV set for company, is seen as just another piece of this magically odd tapestry we call America. There almost certainly are some depths here—the loneliness of losing a spouse, the poignancy of aging, perhaps a touch of senile-onset dementia—but we’re directed to see him as simply quirky, a guy doing his *thing*, man. “Well,” Glass says, “it’s *This American Life*.”

TAL lives at a kind of permanent 70 degrees, moderate humidity. Everyone

says his or her piece, is shown to have a flaw, then is revealed as a pretty all right person in the end. The TV show comes alive, as TV always does, when there’s real anger and passion. The filmmaker and actor G. J. Echternkamp goes home to come to terms with his stepfather. The guy is Frank Garcia, most awesomely the bassist in a band called OXO, which had a hit back in the ’80s called “Whirly Girl.” Now he’s fat, hairy, drunk, and completely disengaged. Frank and G.J.’s mom scream at each other in spasms of mutual distrust and miscomprehension, and she tries, within her limited emotional range, to explain why she was such a bad parent.

G.J. starts from a position of radical empathy for Mom, but makes a classic Glassian turn, realizing that Mom is feeding the dysfunction: She’s as crazy and narcissistic as Frank is. He, still fat and hairy, but maybe not so much of a drunk as G.J. thought, turns out to be a decent guy after all, if flawed in the way we all are: “I want the best for you,” Frank tells G.J. at the end of the segment. This narrative turn might have worked on radio, but on TV, these sloppy, damaged (and completely riveting) characters don’t settle nicely into the Jell-O mold that Glass-as-producer has poured them into. From the start, G.J.’s mom is quite clearly unhinged, and only the most compliant viewer will accept the easy closure Glass imposes on the action.

To be fair, quirk, for all its steel-pike-like dominance of the great lake of indie culture, is not all bad. Wes Anderson’s wonderful 1998 film, *Rushmore*, about Max Fischer (Jason Schwartzman), a disaffected 15-year-old with a penchant for colorful lies and wildly over-the-top high-school theatrical productions, anchored its quirk in authentic human emotion (see particularly the deflated rich guy Herman Blume, played by the peerless Bill Murray). And Anderson’s seemingly random music choices—the Who’s “A Quick One While He’s Away” plays just as Max sets a trap for Blume with a hive of bees; Yves Montand’s “Rue St. Vincent” bubbles in the background as Max awkwardly tries to seduce Miss Cross (Olivia Williams), the

object of both guys’ affections—bespoke a deep understanding of how music can capture and elevate a specific feeling.

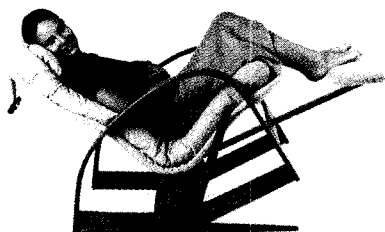
Correctly deployed, quirk yields unexpected treasures, perhaps even finds new ways to unlock that hoary emotion called sentiment, banished from the mainstream American novel (at least the fashionable, well-regarded novel) since sometime before John Barth. Jonathan Safran Foer’s 2002 novel, *Everything Is Illuminated*, uses quirk—it’s narrated in part by a Ukrainian with a uniquely malaprop take on English—to set us up for a powerful, and not at all quirky, modern-day confrontation with the Holocaust’s legacy. In Mark Haddon’s 2003 *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, the narrator is an autistic boy, necessitating a quirkily reductive lens through which the action must be described. Once understanding dawns, the book is that much more affecting and profound. Likewise, *Motherless Brooklyn*, Jonathan Lethem’s stylized 1999 genre novel about a detective with Tourette’s—quirky modern hero situated in classic gangland milieu—works because of the author’s masterful narrative control. (Not-totally-depressing afflictions that generate amusing dramatic configurations are a sign that quirk is afoot: Tony Shalhoub’s quirky Adrian Monk in the TV series *Monk* has OCD; Natalie Portman’s *Garden State* character has epilepsy.)

Which leads to the problem with contemporary quirk: It can quickly go from an effective narrative tool to an end in itself. Anderson, flush from the brilliance of *Rushmore*, dove deep into self-indulgent eclecticism in 2001’s *The Royal Tenenbaums*, which featured a family of dysfunctional geniuses with penchants for, among other things, youthful playwrighting and breeding dalmatian mice. (Speaking of amusing afflictions: Bill Murray’s Oliver Sacks-like neurologist in this film is researching a fictional disease called “Heinsbergen Syndrome,” which is marked by “dyslexia, color blindness, amnesia, and highly acute hearing.”)

In Anderson’s most recent film, *The Life Aquatic With Steve Zissou*—a 2004 take on Jacques Cousteau filled with

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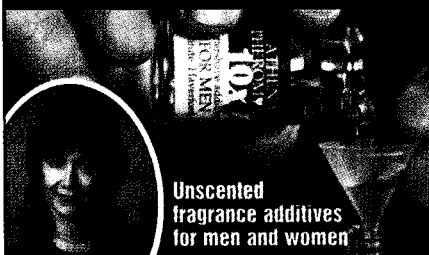
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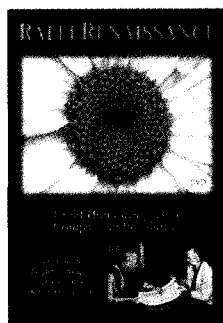


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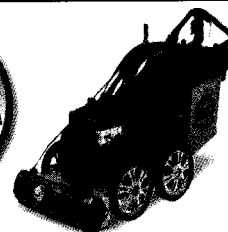
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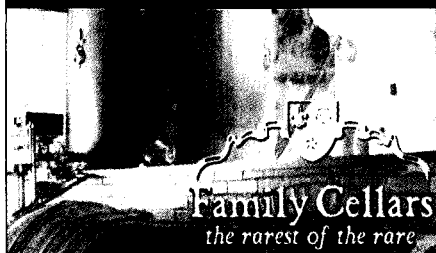
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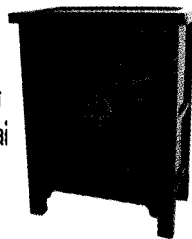
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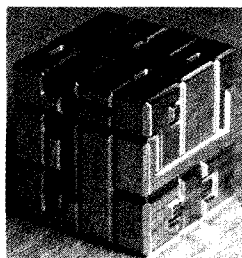
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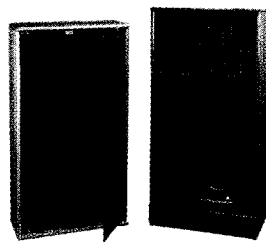
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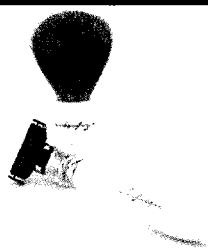
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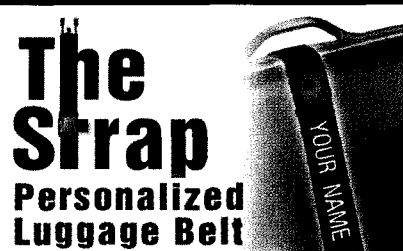
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off-kilter gestures, gorgeous moments, and little narrative thrust—the debased-father/ingenuous-son dynamic played so believably and movingly in *Rushmore* by Murray and Schwartzman is reprised by Murray (playing the aging and mildly fraudulent Zissou as a more rough-hewn assemblage of the same traits he had in *Rushmore*) and Owen Wilson as a series of odd poses without real character development. Meanwhile, on the ship, the Brazilian musician and actor Seu Jorge sings the songs of David Bowie in Portuguese. Anderson's newest, *The Darjeeling Limited*, about three brothers traveling through India, opens the New York Film Fest this month, and it promises, if nothing else, forward motion.

Quirk, loosed from its moorings, quickly becomes exhausting. It's easy for David Cross's character on *Arrested Development* to cover himself in paint for a Blue Man Group audition, or for the New Zealand duo on *Flight of the Conchords* to make a spectacularly cheesy sci-fi video about the future while wearing low-rent robot costumes. But the pleasures are passing. Like the proliferation of meta-humor that followed David Letterman and Jerry Seinfeld in the '90s, quirk is everywhere because quirkiness is so easy to achieve: Just be odd ... but endearing. It becomes a kind of psychographic marker, like wearing laceless Chuck Taylors or ironic facial hair—a self-satisfied pose that stands for nothing and doesn't require you to take creative responsibility. Just because you can doesn't mean you should.

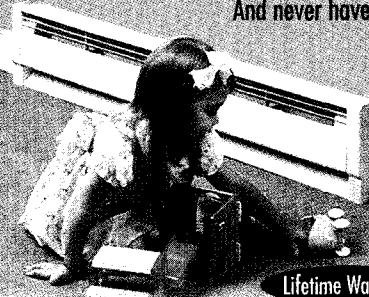
It's harder to construct a coherent universe that has something to say about contemporary life. This is why Judd Apatow's almost 100 percent quirk-free summer comedy, *Knocked Up*, packs such a punch. Its characters face real peril, show real anguish, and have genuine epiphanies. The comedy, at times so funny it's painful, finds its potency in the absurdity of maleness, femaleness, singleness, married life. It dares to matter.

Quirk culture, by contrast, throws up its hands, gives a little chuckle, and says, "Well, it's *This American Life*." ■

Michael Hirschorn is an *Atlantic* contributing editor.

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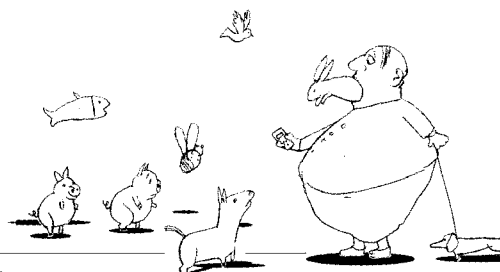
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WORD COURT

BY BARBARA WALLRAFF



JOEL BLUM, of Paris, France, writes: “I have no problem with the nouns *fund-raising* and *fund-raiser*—but what’s up with the verb *fund-raise*? When I saw it the other day on an ACLU Web page, I realized it was starting to seem familiar. But doesn’t normal English call for *raise funds*? Similarly, *bartend* and *caretake*. Are these verbs anomalies or errors?”

Anteaters eat ants, bookkeepers keep books, and cabdrivers drive cabs—so why indeed shouldn’t fund-raisers just *raise funds* and leave it at that? Then again, air conditioners *air-condition* rooms, babysitters *babysit*, and, at least according to some dictionaries, caretakers *caretake*. Maybe *fund-raise* and *bartend* belong to this category of verbs.

Dictionaries aren’t especially helpful. They claim to present the language as it is currently used—but if that’s what they’re doing, you’d think they would agree on whether our three words exist as verbs. The major contemporary American dictionaries—*The American Heritage*, *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate*, *The New Oxford American*, and *Webster’s New World*—are split in each case. Only *The American Heritage* and *The New Oxford American* give *fund-raise*. Only *The American Heritage* and the *Collegiate* give *bartend*. Only the *Collegiate* and *The New Oxford American* give *caretake*.

Of course, now that we have the Internet, we can see for ourselves how the language is currently used, including usage in professionally edited media. According to programs that search

U.S. news sources, *raise funds* continues to be seen much more often than *fund-raise*—though *fund-raise* is now approximately as common a word as, oh, say, *anteater*. *Bartend* appears approximately as often as *tend bar*. *Caretake*, however, is rare, whereas, obviously, *take care* is extremely common.

To me, this suggests that *fund-raise* is unstoppable, *bartend* probably is too, and the jury is still out on *caretake*. All the same, pulling the word apart and putting

that the one is derived from the other. Although I have assured him that it is not, he is convinced that I will be cast as a racist. Should we abandon words that resemble offensive ones from fear of a misunderstanding, or is the burden on the listener to know the difference?”

Sorry, but I side with your husband. Few innocently intended English words are easier to mistake for a vile epithet than *niggardly*. What’s more, the word’s history isn’t as pure as you might suppose. Yes, *niggardly* probably came to us from Scandinavia and originally had nothing to do with black people. But since the late 18th century, according to *The Oxford English Dictionary*, *niggard* has shown “coincidence in form and pronunciation in some regional varieties with *nigger*,” and this “may have influenced the development of sense 1c”: “a harsh, insensitive, or thoughtless person; a lout, a barbarian. Also as a more general term of abuse.”

Apparently, people have been jumbling up the two insults for centuries. There’s no reason to expect them to stop now. I think the burden is always on the speaker to leave as little room for misinterpretation as possible, and therefore *niggardly* doesn’t belong in polite conversation. Why not say *miserly*, *parsimonious*, or *stingy* instead?

Do you have a language dispute? Write to Word Court, The Atlantic Monthly, P.O. Box 67375, Chestnut Hill, MA 02467, or send e-mail to msgrammar@theatlantic.com. All letters become the property of Word Court. Ms. Grammar is also on the Web, at www.theatlantic.com/courtrecord.

GREG CLARKE



the root verb first—*raise funds*, *tend bar*, *take care*—shows more respect for the traditions and usual patterns of English.

SARAH KEMMER, of Weiser, Idaho, writes: “My husband and I are locked in a word-court battle. He has discouraged me from using the word *niggardly* in polite conversation because of its similarity to another N word. He is concerned that people will think

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